









To Solomon Smith Esq.  
with the thanks of  
the Trustees of  
Sir Robert Peel's papers.  
and of the Editor.  
21<sup>st</sup> April 1891



SIR ROBERT PEEL

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*Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A. percut.*

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# SIR ROBERT PEEL

IN EARLY LIFE, 1788-1812  
AS IRISH SECRETARY, 1812-1818  
AND AS SECRETARY OF STATE, 1822-1827

*FROM HIS PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE*

PUBLISHED BY THE TRUSTEES OF HIS PAPERS  
VISCOUNT HARDINGE  
AND  
THE RIGHT HON. ARTHUR WELLESLEY PEEL  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

EDITED BY  
CHARLES STUART PARKER, M.P.

LATE FELLOW OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

*WITH A PORTRAIT*

LONDON  
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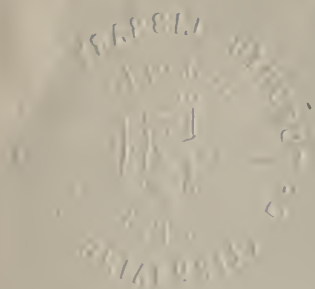
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PEEL FOLD, OSWALDTWISTLE—THE OLD HOME OF THE PEELS

## P R E F A C E

THE political history of the United Kingdom in the first half of the nineteenth century offers no more central and commanding figure than that of Sir Robert Peel.

Forty years have passed since his death, yet amid the changes wrought by time his name remains familiarly associated with institutions which still govern and protect our daily life.

Our Laws of Currency and Banking, our Criminal Law, our Prisons and Juries, our Irish Constabulary, our English and Scottish Police, our Commercial Policy and Free Trade Tariff, our Income Tax and general system of Taxation, all bear the mark of his constructive hand.

To him was due the Ecclesiastical Commission, by whose labours for two generations, apportioning with more efficiency and fairness the great revenues of the Church of England, that ancient fabric has been consolidated and upheld.

Scotland, on the contrary, remembers him as the English statesman in whose day of power her National Church was rent asunder.

In the affairs of Ireland he played a still more prominent part. For six years as Chief Secretary, as Home Secretary for more than eight years, and again for five years as Prime Minister—in all for nearly twenty years, in time of war and in time of peace—he was officially responsible for the means used to rule and civilise that ill-fated country. And out of office, sometimes in resisting, sometimes in supporting, or even suggesting, the Irish measures of his political opponents, in the main his influence still prevailed.

Nor was he less conspicuous as a party leader. An adversary to the last of what he deemed the one-sided and revolutionary Reform Bill of 1832, when vanquished Sir Robert Peel did not despair of the British Monarchy and Constitution.

Rallying his diminished forces, and labouring to confute his own predictions of disaster, he was the first to show how, under new conditions—by patient waiting and by well-timed action, by resource and readiness, by bold reforms and wise concessions, by able administration, severe economy, and masterly finance—statesmen whose aim was to preserve, as far as might be, time-honoured institutions and established landmarks, might still in some degree control political events, and claim in turn a share of power.

But to all this there was another side. Even before, and still more after the Reform Act, in shaping his political course under increasing pressure from the practical necessities of the situation, or from his own ripening convictions, it was Sir Robert Peel's peculiar fortune more than once to find himself at last, contrary to all expectation, the official

advocate and sponsor of important measures which in their earlier stages he had actively opposed.

For relieving Catholic disabilities, which for sixteen years he had been foremost to maintain, he was (to use his own words) 'subjected to the indignity of expulsion by the University of Oxford,' to represent which in Parliament had been the fondest hope and proudest triumph of his youth. And in repealing the Corn Laws he broke up his party, carrying with him, it is true, the majority of his Cabinet, but not the country gentlemen and tenant farmers who had borne him into power.

On both these occasions, as he amply acknowledged, other men had tilled the ground, and sown the seed for the harvest, which in the end he safely garnered. For Catholic relief he gave the praise to Fox and Grattan, to Plunket, and to Canning; for untaxed bread, to Cobden; and justly, for these men had been earnest workers for the cause when he was keeping it back. But in each case, while the issue was yet doubtful, while the waves of opposition still ran high, and when to encounter them no other efficient pilot could be found, he boldly grasped the helm, and with steady hand, at no small cost of personal sacrifice and of sustained exertion, steered the vessel safely into port.

To assign impartially the share—be it large or small—that justly falls to him in the honour of having secured acceptance for these long-contested reforms, to pass judgment on his great conversions, to praise or disapprove the choice he made between the claims of party and an overruling sense of duty to the country at large, belongs to the historian or biographer.

What may be expected from the Trustees of his papers is to give the reader the best means of judging for himself; to set before him in perspicuous order the facts, the argu-

ments, the alternative courses present to the statesman's mind when important decisions had to be taken; to record his actual motives, as made known at the time to his political colleagues, to his family, to his friends.

For this the materials bequeathed were ample; the difficulty was in selection. The preference has been accorded to whatever most illustrates character, and to what had not as yet been published. A few only of the most important letters now given have appeared before, in the 'Life of Canning' and the 'Life of Lord Eldon,' in the 'Correspondence of the Duke of Wellington,' and more recently in the 'Croker Papers.' To omit these would have made the record imperfect. All the rest will be new to the public, and will be found to throw fresh light upon what was already known.

The present volume does not include either of the new departures in policy for which Sir Robert Peel was reproached and deserted by those members of his party who did not see their way to change with him. It reveals him as a rising statesman of exceptional consistency and independent judgment, marked by more than usual readiness from time to time to abandon office rather than submit to be overruled. It exhibits the rapid development and early recognition of his rare ability in administration, in legislation, and in conducting business in the House of Commons. It affords also many examples of his inclination vigorously to reform abuses forced on his attention, and radically to amend defects of system.

Owing to his early and long official connection with Ireland, Irish subjects may appear unduly to predominate. But this has not been carried beyond the proportion which the letters relating to Ireland were found to bear to the whole of the papers for the years in question.

Whether Mr. Peel was writing from Dublin Castle to



Ministers in London, or from the House of Commons or the Home Office to the Government in Dublin, his confidential communications on Irish business were naturally more copious than the record of Imperial or of British affairs, conducted wholly in London, and largely by word of mouth. And in allowing these proportions freely to reproduce themselves in the selection of letters, there appeared to be a twofold advantage. It gave more unity of subject; it gave also more living interest at the present day, when, as it happens, the Sphinx of history is once more putting the question, yet unsolved: With organised agitation, and with an overwhelming voting power (such as existed in the Irish counties before 1829, and exists again since 1884) of tenant farmers, how shall Irish popular demands be reconciled with 'securities,' no longer for a Protestant Established Church (for that, as Sir Robert Peel foresaw, is gone), but for the legislative Union (which he thought might also go), for enforcement of the civil rights of landlords, for individual liberty of action, and generally for good government, as understood by the majority of the United Kingdom?

On this question the policy and the experience, the successes and the failures, of so strong and prudent a statesman of a former generation may throw instructive light.

It remains to acknowledge the labours of predecessors in the task of dealing with the papers, and the kindness of those who have placed further materials at the Editor's disposal.

The first Trustees, Earl Stanhope and Viscount Cardwell, published in 1856 a Memoir drawn up by Sir Robert Peel himself, on 'The Roman Catholic Question, 1828-9.' In 1857 they added two similar Memoirs on 'The New Government, 1834-5,' and 'Repeal of the Corn Laws,

1845-6,' and further announced their intention to select from the correspondence such letters as at that time could properly be made public.

This design was laid aside in favour of a 'Life' to be written by Mr. Goldwin Smith, then Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, and he had made some progress in preparation for the work when unfortunately, from change of residence to America, he found himself unable to complete the larger project, and confined himself to the brief but able biographical notice which appeared in the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' in 1858.<sup>1</sup> To him the Trustees are indebted for general advice, for the selection of some of the letters, and for permission to turn freely to account—so far as suited the present purpose—a sketch made by him for a first chapter of the 'Life.'

Valuable service has been rendered by the late Sir John Milton, Accountant-General of the Army, who (with the aid of his brother, the late Rev. William Milton) completed the heavy task of cataloguing all the papers (in number about 100,000), separating from the rest those of chief importance, and drawing up a summary of them which has been a useful guide.

Thanks are due also to the Rev. Frederick Peel for the use of notes left by his father, William Peel, the best authority on his brother's earliest years; to Lady Portman, for free access to the papers at <sup>Buckhurst</sup> ~~Buckhurst~~ of the Earl of Liverpool; and to C. Leeson Prince, Esq., for efficient assistance in searching through them; to Captain Goulburn, of Betchworth, for leave to examine Sir Robert Peel's original letters to his intimate friend the Right Hon. H. Goulburn; to Henry Hobhouse, Esq., M.P., for extracts from a manuscript diary of the Right Hon. Henry Hobhouse, Under Secretary of State for the Home Department; and

<sup>1</sup> Revised by the present Editor in 1885.

to Alfred Montgomery, Esq., for confidential letters (see Appendix) exchanged between the Marquis of Wellesley and Mr. Peel; also to the Dean of Christ Church, to C. S. Roundell, Esq., and to others, for anecdotes of the early life.

I have to add my acknowledgments to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone for assistance given in several conversations, for the loan of original letters addressed to him, and for opportunities of consulting his collection at Hawarden of books relating to Sir Robert Peel, one of which—the Life of the first Baronet, describing his eldest son in 1804 as a boy of remarkable promise—was not to be found in the British Museum.

I have been aided also by many conversations with the late Viscount Cardwell as to the best mode of dealing with the papers committed partly to his charge. His anxiety, in failing health, to see the task of editing them completed to his mind has been to me (as one of his Executors) a chief inducement to accept the interesting duty offered to me by the present Trustees.

That duty I have endeavoured to fulfil at least with diligence, and with strict regard to Sir Robert Peel's injunction in the Codicil to his Will, 'that no honourable confidence shall be betrayed, no private feelings unnecessarily wounded, and no public interests injuriously affected, in consequence of premature or indiscreet publication.'

Premature the present publication certainly is not; it may rather seem too late. But the Trustees were deliberately of opinion that 'in the case of a truly great statesman his fame has everything to gain and nothing to lose by well-considered delay in the publication of his papers. Such delay affords a proof that there are no party or personal motives to subserve; it allows the party spirit in all other quarters to subside; it both induces and enables

every reader to contemplate every question from a calm, historic point of view.'<sup>2</sup>

The lapse of five-and-thirty years since these words were written, if otherwise to be regretted, has brought at least this advantage, that every document which should appear at all may appear now. And looking to that trait of character which the Duke of Wellington singled out as most distinctive of Sir Robert Peel, his great regard for truth—remembering also his avowed desire to obtain the impartial verdict of posterity on a frank disclosure of the whole truth as regards his own political conduct—it has not seemed indiscreet to give without reserve many letters sixty or seventy years ago most confidential, but at this time well suited to become materials for history.

The work now presented is complete in itself. But it is intended shortly to add two similar volumes recording the later and more arduous stages of Sir Robert Peel's political career.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to *Memoirs* by Sir Robert Peel, 1856.

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PEEL FOLD, OSWALDTWISTLE : THE OLD HOME OF THE PEELS.  
*From a sketch made on the spot in 1891.* *At head of Preface*



# SIR ROBERT PEEL

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## CHAPTER I.

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THE ample and rich collection of records bequeathed by Sir Robert Peel to his trustees does not go back to his earliest years. The series begins with his appointment as Irish Secretary in 1812. 'What has become of my papers previously to that date,' he wrote forty-five years ago, 'I know not;' nor have the mislaid letters since been found. But members of the family have kindly furnished materials for an introductory chapter.

A 'Memoir of the Family of Peel from the year 1600,' compiled in 1836 by Miss Jane Haworth, 'was written,' she says, 'for the late Sir Robert Peel and his family, not for the public.' Her services were thus enlisted :

*Sir Robert Peel to Miss Haworth.*

'Whitehall: Feb. 8, 1836.

'My dear Miss Haworth,—I have as little respect as anyone for the foolish vanity which induces some people, suddenly elevated, and ashamed of their origin, to pay a professional herald for fabricating (as is often the case) a

genealogical descent. Nothing can be more truly ridiculous. But, on the other hand, it argues an almost culpable indifference, or a fear of ascertaining the truth, to neglect the opportunity of collecting the plain facts connected with the origin or early history of a family.

‘Do, therefore, let me constitute you, or constitute yourself, the herald, and get all the information you can with respect to the families of Haworth, Yates, and Peel.

‘Allow me to bear the expense of every kind connected with the investigation, and do not spare any which can promote the object in view. I might do this without mentioning the matter to you, but I am sure that no one will prosecute the inquiry with so much effect, or with half the interest.

‘Affectionately yours,  
‘ROBERT PEEL.’

And later he writes :

‘I safely received the genealogical volume. I feel exceedingly obliged to you for the trouble you have so kindly and so successfully undertaken. There is now, through your exertions, a valuable record which, had a much longer period elapsed, it would have been very difficult to compile. It must have been a work of great labour to trace the existing ramifications. If the descendants of the family are as prolific as their ancestors, there is no chance of early extinction.

‘I was always under an impression that Peel-fold was of very ancient name, and had long been in the possession of the family ; but it is mentioned in Baines’s “History of the Cotten Manufacture,” which I was reading the other day, that the name of the place was changed by either Robert Peel my grandfather or his father.

‘Some facts are quite new to me, such, for instance, as that my grandfather was the first to omit the final e in spelling the name.’

The ancestors of the Peels appear to have migrated, early in the seventeenth century, from the district of Craven, in York-

shire,<sup>1</sup> where they had followed agricultural pursuits, to the neighbouring town of Blackburn, in Lancashire, where they soon transferred their energies to the more lucrative industries of weaving woollen cloth, cotton-spinning, and calico-printing. Miss Haworth's account of the statesman's grandparents and, from personal knowledge, of his parents may be read with interest.

*From Miss Haworth's Memoir.*

' Robert Peel, son of William Peele, inherited the estate of Peelfold in Oswaldtwistle, formerly called "The Crosse," and purchased by his father in 1731. He married, August 28, 1744, Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Edmund Haworth, of Walmesleyfold, in Darwen (a descendant of the ancient family of Haworth of Haworth), by whom he had seven sons and one daughter.

' This Robert Peel was a tall, robust, handsome man, of excellent constitution, with a character for uprightness and persevering industry, and possessing a mechanical genius. He was peculiarly fortunate in his early associations, and by the time his sons grew to manhood he found himself and them established in a new and flourishing business, which raised them to affluence.

' Since about 1750 the trade of Blackburn had consisted chiefly in the manufacture of calicoes, which were dyed for ordinary purposes; but the art of bleaching them then was not practised or known. Quantities of these goods commonly called "Blackburn greys" were sent to London, and in its vicinity being bleached and printed, from London were dispersed into the country.

' Mr. Jonathan Haworth, a very intelligent and enterprising character, with extended views of commerce, which he had probably acquired during a residence of several years in London, returned home with a persevering desire to establish the printing of calicoes in Lancashire. In furtherance of this scheme he claimed the assistance of his

<sup>1</sup> The word Peel denotes a castlet or fort, formerly an appendage to a baronial residence, and on the

borders of Yorkshire and Lancashire there still remain two of these, Bolton Peel and Hellifield Peel.

brother-in-law Mr. Peel, and also of Mr. Yates of Blackburn, about 1764. Their earliest experiments were upon handkerchiefs and shawls of the simplest patterns, but difficulties of imitation being surmounted the trade grew and flourished. A warehouse was opened in Manchester for the sale of the goods, and this partnership continued till about the year 1774 at Blackburn. The firm was Haworth, Peel, and Yates, Mr. Haworth having two shares in the concern, his partners each one. This concern is still considered to have been the parent of the printing trade in Manchester.'

Besides printing works the firm had factories for spinning and weaving by water or horse power. These new industries created a demand in Lancashire for unskilled labour, to supply which children and even adults were imported from a distance. Meanwhile the spinners and weavers by hand found their craft in danger. Discontent ensued, and riots. Mobs destroyed the machines, including those of Haworth, Peel, and Yates. In consequence of this outbreak Robert Peel removed to Burton-upon-Trent, where he built three mills. His business there prospered, and his wealth increased, while Blackburn suffered from having driven capital away.

It is possible that this collision with the spirit of disorder among the people may have contributed, with the growing wealth and high commercial rank of the Peel family, to impress upon them that Tory reverence for authority and liking for strong government which they have combined with manly pride in their industrial origin, and hearty sympathy with the working classes. To return to the memoir.

'The above Robert Peel [the grandfather] omitted the final *e* in writing his name, which has been followed by all his descendants. On his demise he left his paternal estate, Peelfold, to the lineal heir, and his personal property, divided in eight shares, amounting to about 13,000*l.* each, to his children and their representatives. He had retired from business many years previous to his death in 1795, and resided at Ardwick Green [a suburb of Manchester]. His widow survived him a few years; they were interred in their vault beneath St. John's Church, Manchester.'

Robert Peel of Peelfold is thus further commemorated by his son :

*Sir Robert Peel (First Baronet) to Mr. John Corry.*

‘ My father employed his talents in improving the cotton trade. I lived under his roof till I attained the age of manhood, and had many opportunities of discovering that he possessed in an eminent degree a mechanical genius, and a good heart.

‘ He had many sons, and placed them all in situations that they might be useful to each other. The cotton trade was preferred as best calculated to secure this object, and by habits of industry, and imparting to his offspring an intimate knowledge of the various branches of the cotton manufacture, he lived to see his children connected together in business, and, without one exception, opulent and happy.

‘ My father may truly be said to have been the founder of our family, and he so accurately appreciated the importance of commercial wealth in a national point of view that he was often heard to say that “the gains to the individual were small compared with the national gains arising from trade.”

‘ The only record of my father is to be found in the memory of his surviving friends.’

After tracing the descendants of two elder sons, Miss Haworth comes to the Prime Minister’s father, the first Sir Robert Peel.

*Descendants of Robert Peel of Peelfold, Third Branch.*

‘ Robert, third son, born at Peelfold, April 25, 1750, was early a child of promise, and, being distinguished by his abilities and acuteness, was sent from Blackburn grammar school to London to complete his education, after which he returned home and began his career in business under his father’s eye, who was a partner in that house which first introduced the calico printing into Lancashire.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Others say that the first, but on a smaller scale, were the Claytons of Bamber Bridge, near Preston.

The partnership being dissolved to enable the principals to form more extensive concerns, Mr. Peel and his other sons fixed their residence at Churchkirk, near Blackburn, but not so Robert, the third son. He at this period separated his interests from those of his father and brothers to join his uncle Mr. Haworth, who with his nephew and his former partner Mr. Yates then established the printing works at Bury. Both concerns were very prosperous, and when the said Robert Peel married, in his thirty-fourth year, he had acquired a very considerable property. He married Ellen, eldest daughter of Mr. Yates, then in her eighteenth year. She possessed personal beauty, with a mind entirely in accordance with the wishes and views of her husband. Her appearance and carriage graced a court, and the urbanity of her manners harmonised with his benevolence and hospitality. Their happiness and ambition centred in each other and their offspring, to whose early education the most unremitting attention was given. Mr. Peel was never too much engrossed with the cares of business or with parliamentary duties to forego inspecting the progress of his sons' studies, instructing their minds, and strengthening their memories. And he enjoyed the pleasing experience how grateful a thing it is to sow good seed in a fruitful soil.'

Of this eminent man, whose sagacity, energy, and thrift placed the family in the first rank of the aristocracy of commerce, and opened to them the highest honours of the State, a very full account is given by his cousin Sir Lawrence Peel, who speaks of him as having been 'in his business an originator and reformer.' This is true chiefly of his importation and organisation of labour. Bringing from the London workhouses deserted children, he employed them under discipline, and, while giving them education, enabled them to earn their living. He also appreciated, with an open and sagacious mind, and applied with an enterprising and resolute spirit, the improvements originated by others, such as Hargreaves and Arkwright. He is described as a man of strong will and untiring energy, whose life for many a day was one of hard and incessant labour. Although his firm in the end prospered greatly, there were difficulties at

first, owing to the restricted credit of those days, and Mr. Peel, in spite of his growing wealth, lived very frugally before his marriage.

When riches increased he does not seem to have set his heart upon them, but rather upon affection, upon the goodwill which attends kindness and beneficence, upon the consciousness of an upright and useful life, upon the honour which awaits a true and active lover of his country, and upon the unselfish pride and happiness which flowed to him from the rising fame of his illustrious son.

He was himself half a statesman, as well as a great manufacturer, and in him not only did the commercial prosperity of the family reach its highest point, but their political eminence began. In 1790 he entered Parliament as member for Tamworth, where he had revived the declining fortunes of the borough by introducing cotton manufactures, and had bought the neighbouring large estate of Drayton Manor. He became an ardent adherent of Pitt, who was then, in his better and happier hour, carrying into effect the principles of commercial and economical reform which he had learnt from Adam Smith, and whose rare and enlightened devotion to the leading interests of the country made him a statesman after the heart of the great manufacturer.

'No Minister,' said Sir Robert Peel, when an attack was made upon Mr. Pitt, after his resignation, in the House of Commons, 'ever understood so well the commercial interests of the country. He knew that the true sources of its greatness lay in its productive industry. The late Minister had been the benefactor of his country, and had neglected no interest but his own.'

When Pitt and the Tory party entered upon the war with France, Peel gave them staunch support; he commanded six companies, mostly men in his own employment, of Bury Royal Volunteers, and his firm subscribed 10,000*l.* to the sum raised by voluntary contributions towards carrying on the war. Pitt appreciated his devotion, valued his opinion, often consulted him on financial and commercial matters, and in the year 1800 made him a Baronet. In assuming that half-feudal honour he took the by no means feudal motto of 'Industry,' and as his arms three sheaves of arrows with a bee volant, and for crest a demi-lion holding between the paws a shuttle.

He was not much of a speaker, though an attack on the Minister to whom he paid allegiance could move him to reply. A strong speech which he made at Manchester in 1792 to a Tory association, urging the people to put down revolutionists, was

followed by violence on the part of a 'Church and King' mob, and exposed him to a sharp attack in the House by the friends of the Revolution. His speech in Parliament in favour of an incorporate Union with Ireland was deemed important, and was published in Dublin, 1799. With the general policy of Mr. Pitt he devoutly embraced that relating to the currency, and wrote a pamphlet on the National Debt as a national blessing, advocating opinions—to use his own words—'unsupported by the general sentiments of mankind.' On the other hand, he resisted, on sound principles, restrictions tending to raise the price of food; he condemned attempts to fix by law the wages of grown men; and, after long and persevering endeavours, he was the first (assisted by his son) to pass an Act limiting the hours of work in factories for children.

Sir Lawrence Peel, dwelling at great length on family character, records his own opinion, confirmed by the authority of another relative, who knew both father and son intimately, that the second Sir Robert Peel bore a strong resemblance to the first—'a likeness pervading the whole man, extending even to trivial things, and to some habits of domestic life.' This is probably exaggeration, but with a basis of fact.

Sir Robert Peel the statesman appears to have inherited from his ancestors qualities which raise a man high, and make his elevation a blessing to his fellows—a character of sterling worth rooted in sound morality and genuine religion; industry, energy, perseverance, enterprise, strong practical sense, the presence of which was marked, as usual, by a touch of shrewd humour; wisdom to discern what could be done, with resolution to do it; and, if not the genius which creates, the sagacity and openness of mind which appreciates and applies. From their frugality and prudence in affairs the great financier learnt to husband and to employ the resources of the State. Their moral and temperate habits bequeathed to their descendant the inestimable advantage of a vigorous constitution, capable of bearing the immense labours of his long political career. Their self-denial accumulated the ample fortune which formed a guarantee of his independence and a stepping-stone to power.

The future Prime Minister was born on February 5, 1788, probably at the family residence, Chamber Hall, near Bury, in Lancashire, not, as is often repeated, in a cottage near the Hall. Mr. William Peel writes:

'As I was born a year and a half after my brother, my evidence as to the place of his birth must of necessity be



secondary. But, knowing that the locality was disputed, I have given myself trouble to ascertain the point, and my impression now is that he was born in the old house at Chamber Hall.'<sup>3</sup>

It is said that the father, on hearing of the birth of this his eldest son, fell on his knees in private, and, returning thanks to God, vowed that he would give his child to his country. And among the letters received by Sir Robert Peel on his accession to the post of Prime Minister, in 1834, has been preserved one congratulating him on 'having to the very letter accomplished the wish which I have often been told was most anxiously expressed by your worthy father on the day of your baptism—viz. that you might tread in the footsteps of the immortal Pitt.'

In reply to an inquiry as to the probable truth of such stories, Miss Haworth wrote the following further account of the parents, and of the child's home life :

*Miss Haworth to Mrs. Cardwell.*

'I cannot affirm that the speech from the first Sir Robert Peel at the christening of his son, that "he gave him to his country," was a fact; but I can believe it was, because the whole tenor of the parent's conduct respecting that son almost from his cradle was in accordance with it. He was at all times in a course of education. It was line upon line, and precept upon precept, in a most familiar and pleasing way, which rendered it acceptable to the child.

'A most respectable clergyman, then a curate at Bury, gave his attendance as tutor daily for a couple of hours to instruct the four eldest, two girls and two sons, Robert and William. On removing to Drayton the sons were placed with the Rev. Mr. Blick, at Tamworth, till of an age for public schools.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. William Peel adds: 'I was told by my tutor's wife, Mrs. Hargreaves, who was intimately acquainted with my family long before 1788, that I was born in a cottage near Chamber Hall, and I am satisfied that what she said was correct. I believe that Chamber Hall was at the time not only being repaired but

that a new front was then being built, consisting of a larger dining-room, drawing-room, hall, &c. It is possible that the building might have commenced as early as February 5, 1788, but my belief is that my father added to the Hall subsequently to my brother's birth.'

‘I knew Lady Peel nearly as well as my own eldest sisters, with whom she was educated, at the most popular school out of London in those days, kept by Mr. and Mrs. Latifore at Derby.

‘We were always much associated, and she corresponded with me till the illness which proved fatal. It was occasioned by going into public too soon after the birth of Harriet, Dowager Lady Henley. There was a letter from her at that time in which she wrote that she had taken her daughters to a ball at Lord Derby’s, which caused my mother much consternation. She had enjoyed excellent health previously.’

Whether the earliest superintendence described by Miss Haworth was in all respects well-judged has been called in question. ‘As the child grew,’ says Sir Lawrence Peel, ‘his father set to work seriously on the manufacture of another Pitt.’ To be manufactured into another Pitt is not an unmixed advantage to a child, and it may seem that in his first years Peel was somewhat overtrained. But here too loose a rein has been given to imagination. His brother William, the next to him in age, has left this record of the facts.

‘The retentiveness of his memory was most remarkable. Before he was nine years old he would, by my father’s direction, repeat on Sunday evenings both the morning and afternoon sermons which he had heard preached.

‘I was present at all my brother’s displays for at least four years before he was ten, and I am sure that he not only never attempted to make, but he never was asked to make, an extempore speech. He repeated many lines from Goldsmith, Pope, and other poets.

‘At about five years of age he was placed under the instruction of the Rev. James Hargreaves, Curate of Bury. He could not have been committed to one more capable of instilling virtuous principles into a youthful mind.

‘Under the tuition of Mr. Hargreaves my brother remained till he was in his tenth year. He had at that time learnt much from my father, much more by his own reading, and from Hargreaves very little in English, Latin, and

general knowledge. His classical studies, until he went to Mr. Blick's school, did not extend beyond the Latin grammar.

'The Rev. Francis Blick was Vicar of Tamworth, and came to live in one of my father's houses at Bonehill, half-way between Drayton Manor and Tamworth. He had an excellent school, and had for his pupils the sons of the principal county gentlemen in the neighbourhood. My brother, by application and ability, soon became the best scholar of his age at Mr. Blick's.'

He is described by his cousin as having been in early years 'always under strict discipline, a good boy of gentle manners, quick in feeling, very sensitive, impatient of opposition from his young companions, and dreading ridicule overmuch.'

His shyness clung to him throughout life. His sensitiveness was physical as well as moral, so that it is said the pinch of his fingers in a door made him faint with pain. 'A few weeks before the accident which caused his death, he received a blow on his hand, which had been suddenly pressed against the bar of an inclosure in the Zoological Gardens, while he was patting the head of a goat, and even this small injury caused an attack of faintness which lasted a considerable time.'<sup>4</sup>

He was apparently, however, not without vigorous animal spirits and the love of mischief in boyhood, as he was certainly not without the love of fun in after life. A youthful prank at Bury, recorded on the authority of Mr. Ellis Wood, of that town, shows both character and mettle. Having the luck one day to find the belfry door open at the parish church, Peel and another lad (as lads will) rushed in to ring the bells. Wood following, and being taller and stronger, forced them aside, and was busy himself ringing, when young Peel sprang upon his shoulders, grasped the ropes higher up, and pulled them to such purpose as to cant the bells. Wood, being awkwardly entangled in the ropes, swooned from pain, and a ringer, hastening to the rescue, was at no loss to trace the mischief to its author.

At Tamworth, Peel was already regarded as a pupil of great promise. A lively epistle despatched by his three youngest brothers in 1812 from Rugby, to offer their congratulations on

<sup>4</sup> Sir Benjamin Brodie to the Right Hon. Edward Cardwell.

his Irish office and emoluments, which last, they suggest, will place him in funds to remember handsomely the necessities of schoolboys, records a saying of his first schoolmaster that

‘ Robert Peel and Robert Brown  
Are all the hope of Tamworth town.’

And one of his teachers, being asked by the father whether William would be a William Pitt, is said to have answered, ‘ I hope so, but Robert will be Robert Peel.’

From Bonehill, at the usual age, Peel went to Harrow. The school records of admissions at that date, it seems, are lost. ‘ This is the more strange,’ writes Dr. Montagu Butler, ‘ as my father, who was Head Master from 1804, was singularly methodical in all his habits, and had a perfect passion for Harrow antiquities. Undoubtedly we ought to know at Harrow the day and year when our greatest man joined us.’ Fortunately, if not the day, the year and month are recorded by his brother, who continues :

‘ Wishing that Robert should be removed at the proper age to a public school, my father made every inquiry as to what school was considered the best, and determined to send him at thirteen years of age to Harrow, of which Dr. Drury was the Head Master. He was placed in the house of the Rev. Mark Drury.

‘ The school stood very high in those days. Robert was at Harrow with the Dukes of Grafton, Devonshire, and Sutherland. He went there in January 1801, at which time, or within a year, there were four boys who became Prime Ministers—Lord Ripon, my brother Robert, Lord Aberdeen, and Lord Palmerston.

‘ My brother had learnt perhaps at Mr. Blick’s as much as he would have learnt at any other school, with this exception. Mr. Blick not having the art of composing or of teaching others to compose Latin verses (the great desideratum in those days at a public school), Robert, before he was placed in the fourth form, employed his time [at Harrow] principally in Latin verse composition. He was too clever to require much time to qualify himself for the fourth form exercises.’

During this earliest phase of Harrow life he encountered his least pleasant experience of a public school. Having been told by his tutor that he might expect to be placed in a form exempt from fagging, yet finding himself ordered to perform some irksome duty of that nature, Peel thought he had the right and had the spirit to refuse. For this he underwent a cruel beating. Moore tells a pleasing story that, while Peel was writhing under merciless punishment, the child Byron, in tears of mingled pity and indignation, came forward, offering to take half. Such generous feeling and action William Peel affirms to have been quite in Byron's character, but he regrets being unable to vouch for it as fact. The incident occurred, he thinks, in March or April, and Byron did not come to Harrow till some months later.

Byron was older by a fortnight than Peel, but his early education had been neglected. The school lists show that in 1803 Peel was in the upper fifth, and Byron in the under fifth; in 1804 they spoke together, Byron as *Latinus* (sitting, to conceal his lameness), Peel as *Turnus*. The best-known account of what Peel was at Harrow was found in one of Byron's notebooks, in the characteristic form of a comparison with himself.

'Peel was my form-fellow, and we were both at the top of our remove. We were on good terms, but his brother was my intimate friend.<sup>5</sup> There were always great hopes of Peel amongst us all, masters and scholars, and he has not disappointed them. As a scholar he was greatly my superior, as a declaimer and actor I was reckoned at least his equal. As a schoolboy out of school, I was always in scrapes, and he never; in school he always knew his lesson, and I rarely; but when I knew it, I knew it nearly as well. In general information, history &c. I think I was his superior, as well as of most boys of my standing.'

In another passage, not so often quoted, Byron writes: 'I have never heard anyone who fulfilled my idea of an orator. Peel, strange to say, I have never heard, though I often wished to do so; but from what I remember of him at Harrow he is, or should be, among the best of them.'

An American schoolfellow, Charles King, President of Columbia College, thus described Peel:

'It is a sad pleasure to recall him as he was nearly half a century ago, the light-haired, blue-eyed, fair-complexioned, smiling, good-natured boy, indolent somewhat as to physical exertion, but overflowing with mental energy, and gifted with a

<sup>5</sup> William Peel often carried Byron, being lame, to the bathing-place known as 'Duck Puddle.'

most remarkable facility of acquiring knowledge. What cost to others hours of severe study seemed to be acquired by him without an effort, and once acquired was appropriated for ever. His habits as a school-boy were less gregarious than those of school-boys generally. While others in the hours of recreation were engaged in cricket, football, hunt-the-hare, or other violent bodily exercises, he would be wandering off alone, strolling through the fields and along the hedge-rows, communing with nature, possibly with himself, but every now and then knocking down a bird with a stone, at which he was a great adept.

‘Peel soon asserted and always maintained his superiority as a scholar. Classics were almost the only study of that day, but they were studied to some purpose, and with some results. Peel mastered their languages, their literature, and their poetry, and so thoroughly familiar was he with them that it has happened to the writer more than once, after a half-holiday, when each boy of the upper forms was required to produce a copy of Latin or Greek verses, to see Peel surrounded, while the school-bell was yet ringing, with boys who had neglected their exercises, calling upon him to supply them, which he did, writing now Latin, now Greek, with as much facility as though it were his mother-tongue and upon everyday topics.

‘His superiority as a scholar was tempered by the easiest good-nature and the readiest smile. He was not, however, an impulsive boy, nor ever in excess of any sort. He was physically indolent, and therefore rarely in mischief, or exposed to the censure of the master.’<sup>6</sup>

Another old Harrovian, the late Mr. Roundell, of Gledstones, used to tell how once, when Peel had just left the pupil-room, Mark Drury, his tutor, said, ‘I shall not live to see it, but you boys will one day see Peel Prime Minister.’

His frequent absence from cricket or football, remarked by several of his schoolfellows, had, it seems, a special motive, to them unknown. Like most English boys, Peel had a passion for field sports, which, unlike most boys, he contrived to indulge at school. In this pursuit his confidant and comrade was Robert Anstruther, described by Peel as ‘one of my earliest friends, for whom I have always felt a strong attachment.’ Had masters kept watch, the two lads might have been seen together calling at a detached cottage where they kept their guns, and in due time returning with trophies of their skill, believed, by those

\* From the *Connecticut Courant*, 1850.

who were not in the secret, to have been acquired with no better weapon than a well-aimed stone.

In his last year at Harrow, Peel took more part in football, and 'his strength and pluck,' says his brother, 'caused him to be considered one of the best players in the school.'

From general testimony it would seem that, urged by his father to exertion, he was an industrious boy, and turned his opportunities to good account. Yet he did not himself look back on his school studies with entire satisfaction, for in later years, advising a friend as to the education of his sons, after saying that he prefers a public school, but does not much care which, he adds, 'I was at Harrow myself, but I would not send my boys there unless I believed, what I have reason to believe, that it is better conducted now than it was when I misspent my time there.' Men who have achieved great things in after life are perhaps apt to be under the illusion that more might have been effected than was really possible, or at best probable, in their school days. He did send three of his boys to Harrow, and showed that he was not wanting in affection for his old school by founding there an essay prize, which was gained, and received in his own presence, by his son Frederick, and, a generation later, by two grandsons in succession, William and Arthur George Villiers Peel.

One attainment of great value for busy public life, a well-trained powerful memory, the statesman owed chiefly to the discipline, not of school, but of his home. It is recorded how Lord Chatham studied to impart to the younger Pitt a good command of well-selected words. Not less pains did the first Sir Robert Peel take to train and store the memory of his son. Feats of recollection, as already mentioned, were required of him as a child, and this went on to a later age. In a 'Memoir of Sir Robert Peel' the father, published anonymously<sup>7</sup> in 1804, after recording that 'even when commercial affairs were most urgent, the midnight lamp incessantly witnessed the labour with which he cultivated his intellectual faculties,' the author adds :

'The plan of reading which he early prescribed to himself he not only recommended his children to pursue, but daily trains them in the practice of it.

'His eldest son, a youth of most promising talents, who is little more than fifteen years of age, has been so much in the habit of exercising the retentiveness of his memory conformably

<sup>7</sup> A copy in Mr. Gladstone's possession gives the author's name as the Rev. Richard Davies, B.D., Vicar of St. Nicholas', Leicester.

to this method, that very few indeed of his age can carry with them more of the sentiments of an author than he can.

‘When he reads a portion of a book, closing the volume, he immediately retraces the impressions which were made on his memory: and the mind, we know, when conscious that it is to reflect the images presented to it, embraces them with avidity, and holds them with more than common tenacity.’

Probably the best part also of his moral education was that which he received from the insensible training of a home which, though wealthy, was free from luxury and dissipation, and retained the strict morality and religious habits of the English middle class. He had constantly before him the example of a father whose ambition, though ardent, had never deviated from the path of honour, and who owed nothing to gambling adventure, but everything to steadiness and perseverance.

His brother William continues:

‘At the Christmas vacation 1804, Robert left Harrow. He was then nearly seventeen years of age. He was to go to college in October 1805, so that he had some time to pass between leaving Harrow and going to Christ Church.

‘He was at my father’s house in Upper Grosvenor Street during the London season of 1805. He was very regular in his attendance at the House of Commons, under the gallery. He also attended lectures [on natural science] at the Royal Institution.

‘He left London in the summer of 1805, and it was then that he determined to make up the time he considered he had lost at Harrow. When I arrived at Drayton for the summer vacation, I found Robert reading in earnest. He allowed himself at that time but two hours a day for accompanying me in shooting. I found on his desk, which he used for reading, that he had written

*nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ;*

and in another part was

*quid ferre recusent,  
quid valeant humeri.*

‘Wishing to distinguish himself in mathematics as well as in classics, he told my father he would like to have a



mathematical tutor at Drayton before he went to Oxford. My father, with his usual good sense, determined to go to the fountain-head. He wrote to the Rev. James Wood, afterwards Master of St. John's, Cambridge, to request he would recommend a tutor. Mr. Wood prevailed on the Rev. R. Bridge, who had been Senior Wrangler in 1790, to pass a few months at Drayton, and it was no doubt a good deal owing to his instruction that Robert was in the first class, the only one in that class in 1808.'

In thanking Mr. Bridge for a treatise on 'The Principles of Natural Philosophy,' Mr. Peel himself writes, in 1813: 'I much fear that my mathematical knowledge is on the decline. Whenever I have an opportunity of renewing it, I have every motive from past experience to return to the source whence it was originally derived.'

At Christ Church, Oxford, Robert Peel entered as a gentleman commoner in October 1805, being then in his eighteenth year. Christ Church was the college most frequented by families of rank, therefore the best for a young man wishing to form connections with a view to political life. But it was also at that time the most distinguished of Oxford colleges as a place of education. The Dean was the famous Cyril Jackson, under whose illustrious administration the college had risen to the highest pitch of renown. Always on the watch for ability, he soon formed a high estimate of the promising gentleman commoner. To his schoolfellow Mr. Roundell, who was with him again at Christ Church, the Dean remarked: 'Harrow has sent us up at least one good scholar in Mr. Peel.' And his brother records that when some undergraduates had incurred the Dean's wrath, and were in peril, they said: 'Peel, you must go and pacify him; no one can do it but you.' He had as tutor for a short time<sup>8</sup> Mr. Gaisford, who became the well-known Greek Professor and Dean, but soon he passed under the care of the Rev. Charles Lloyd, afterwards (partly, as will be seen, through the exertions of his pupil) Regius Professor of Divinity, and Bishop of Oxford. Lloyd was not only an excellent tutor, but a friend and counsellor to whom Peel was warmly attached, and whose advice he valued highly on the most critical occasions of his early public life. Letters which passed between them are in fact

<sup>8</sup> Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool, April 29, 1824.

the best record of Peel's inmost thoughts on political subjects down to the time of the Bishop's premature death. The Rev. James Webber, senior tutor of Christ Church, though not Peel's tutor, was also zealous in contributing his aid. 'He allowed me to attend him, and gave me more assistance than even his own pupils had a right to expect from him.'<sup>9</sup>

When to the classics, the usual staple of an English gentleman's education, Peel added the less usual study of mathematics, it was perhaps rather as a mental discipline, or as a means of gaining distinction, than as a matter of taste. At least, after having left the University, while assuring Mr. Lloyd that he is eager to renew their intercourse, he adds 'except as regards conic sections and matters of that kind.' Yet Dean Gaisford used to relate that when Peel was examined orally in 'Robertson's Conic Sections,' the way in which he answered called forth the admiration of all that heard him.

From the classics, like many of our statesmen, he drew not only his forms of expression, but to a considerable extent his modes of political thought, and his idea of the 'character of a public man. From the mathematics (for which, when member for the University, he thought of founding a prize) besides a facility in calculation most useful to the future financier, he acquired method and arrangement in his great financial speeches. Neither jurisprudence, nor political economy, nor modern history, then formed part of the University course; in these subjects he had all to learn after leaving college. But how lofty an estimate he formed of the value for public life of classical studies appears plainly from a passage in his rectorial address at the University of Glasgow.

'I ask you simply to pass in succession the names of those who have stood most conspicuous in the great arena of public competition. Take the most recent period of our history preceding our own, when the means of acquiring various knowledge have been so extensive, that there is the opportunity for fair comparison between the several attainments which may have assisted the competitor for public honours.

'What are the chief names (I am speaking of public life) that have floated down and are likely to remain buoyant on the stream of time? Of the whole number, how large is the

<sup>9</sup> Mr. Peel to Sir R. Peel, March 9, 1818.

proportion of men eminent for classical acquirements and classical tastes! In the judicial station there are Lord Mansfield, Lord Stowell, Lord Ellenborough, Lord Tenterden. In political life, Lord North, Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox, Mr. Burke, Lord Grenville, Mr. Windham, Mr. Canning, all pre-eminent for classical attainments.'

To these great names, even while he spoke, his audience must have added that of Peel. And it was no doubt from his own experience of the general good effects of Oxford training that he thus advised the Glasgow students:

'Mental discipline, the exercise of the faculties of the mind, the quickening of your apprehension, the strengthening of your memory, the forming of a sound, rapid, and discriminating judgment, are of even more importance than the store of learning. Establish control over your own minds. Practise the economy of time. Exercise an unremitting vigilance over the acquirement of habit. These are the arts, this is the patient and laborious process, by which, in all times and in all professions, the foundations of excellence and of fame have been laid.'

Excellence as a speaker was evidently one great object of his early ambition, and his eloquence was consciously modelled on that of the Greeks and Romans. Among his favourite authors, it appears, was Cicero, and a student in the reign of Cyril Jackson could not fail to be well read in Homer. Quintilian, even in London, was often in his hand—no doubt, as a master of oratorical style.

Though a steady worker at the University, Peel also enjoyed society. He was a handsome man, and at this time of a good figure, dressed well, was fond of manly exercises, and, though always an indifferent rider, was a good shot. His companions he seems to have chosen less with a view to intellectual intercourse than to social enjoyment. Nor did he lose at Oxford his love of fun. The Dean (Liddell) of Christ Church recalls an instance of it narrated by the late Dean (Scott) of Rochester, on the authority of his father, who was at Christ Church with Peel.

'A young Irishman named C. (if I remember rightly) came to Christ Church as a gentleman commoner. He

was believed to be profoundly ignorant of all the arts which *emolliunt mores* &c. Peel is said to have sent word to Mr. C. that the Vice-Chancellor would call upon him at such an hour, to ascertain the truth of reports which had reached him respecting Mr. C.'s state of learning. Accordingly, having dressed himself in two gentlemen commoners' gowns, one before and one behind, and preceded by a scout bearing a huge poker, he repaired to Mr. C.'s rooms. In severe tones he addressed the unfortunate man. "Sir, I have been informed that you are unable to read Greek. Here, sir, is a Greek Testament; let me hear you read the first verses of St. John's Gospel." The terrified youth looked hopelessly at the book, and confessed his inability to read a word. "Sir," said Peel, "I find I have been rightly informed. You will hear from me further about the matter." So saying, he stalked out of the room. It was believed that the unhappy Irishman packed up his things and was heard of no more in Oxford.'

Of Peel's more eminent contemporaries at Oxford the only one with whom his letters show him to have associated was Van Mildert, afterwards Bishop of Durham, who refers to 'the pleasing intercourse he had with him in early years.' With his schoolfellows from Harrow, the Duke of Sutherland, Drummond, T. Chaplin, John Mills, and Lord Plymouth, he was on familiar terms, and the last three of these are named by his brother as having paid him visits at his father's house or at his own. His college friendships appear to have been affectionate and faithful. To one friend, Mr. Bache Thornhill, some years afterwards (in 1813), he writes:

'Believe me, my dear Thornhill, that every feeling of friendship and regard that I ever had for you, every pleasure that I ever derived from the conviction that that feeling was a mutual one, has survived my long separation from you. There lives not one with whom I am more anxious to renew, not my friendship, for that requires not renewal, but my former habits of daily intercourse. You have paid me a visit in London, you are of an erratic and adventurous turn, you have not been in Ireland, and what

reason can you urge for not paying me a visit at the Phoenix Lodge on my return? Choose your companion. Where is James? Where is Browne? I am sure they cannot doubt of the real satisfaction that it will give me to have them the inmates of my house. I shall leave it to you to make the arrangements for the journey. You will only act upon the assurance that at all seasons you and your companions, be they who they may, will be the most welcome visitors that can cross the threshold of my house.

‘P.S.—I suppose you will have long since concluded that I must be a candidate for Oxford. There is no honour which I should covet half so much as that of representing the University, but I have not presumption or industry enough to aspire to it, and have never thought of attempting it.’

Thornhill and James became country rectors, with a turn, the one for art, the other for philosophy and parish economy, and kept up correspondence with Peel.

Oxford at this date had newly awakened from a long lethargy, and for the mock examination which students, in Lord Eldon’s time, passed for the degree had substituted a real examination with honours in classics and mathematics. Peel was the first man to combine the highest honours in both schools, and an enterprise so ambitious, as the crisis drew near, led him for a time into the grave mistake of overwork.

‘I doubt,’ says his brother, ‘whether anyone ever read harder than Robert for two or three terms before he passed his examination. He assured me that he had read eighteen hours in the day and night. The consequence was that before the time arrived for the examination he, from want of exercise and want of sleep, had brought himself into so nervous a state that he wrote to my father to propose that he should not attempt to go up, as he was convinced he would do nothing.’

His father, as usual judging wisely, gave him every encouragement to go on, and with due care for health he soon regained his habitual nerve and coolness.

On the eve of his examination a friend found the coming

double-first-class man enjoying a vigorous game of tennis. 'Hollo, Peel,' said he, 'I thought you were in the schools to-morrow?' 'So I am,' Peel answered; 'pray, is that any reason why I should not be here to-day?'<sup>1</sup>

The examination, now given mainly on paper, was then almost entirely oral, so that a brilliant examination was a public triumph. A letter remains from an undergraduate friend, afterwards Peel's brother-in-law, describing with enthusiasm the unprecedented achievement.

*Mr. G. R. Dawson to Rev. Mark Drury.*

'Christ Church, Oxford: Nov. 19, 1808.

'Knowing how much you are interested in the subject of this letter, I hasten to have the pleasure of acquainting you with the result of Peel's examination.

'Previous to it he could not but have been aware that the knowledge of his great abilities had excited considerable expectation not only in his own college, but throughout the whole university, and his conduct on that account was characterised with a pleasing modesty, which (as it was more amiable in a man of his extraordinary talents) interested everyone more in his favour.

'This morning he went into the schools, and then indeed was the time in which it was to be proved whether the reputation he had acquired was exaggerated or not. Expectation was not disappointed, but rather he exceeded what even the expectation of his friends had conceived of him. The crowd that went to hear him resembled more the assembly of a public theatre than that attending a scholastic examination, and it was hard to decide which seemed more diffident of entering upon the business, the examiners or the examined.

'After having examined him in divinity, which is a kind of qualifier to the rest of the examination, the masters proceeded to Aristotle. One answer was sufficient to render any further disquisition unnecessary, for it embraced and anticipated whatever could afterwards follow. His flow of

<sup>1</sup> From the late Rev. Thomas Short.

language and strength of reasoning clearly showed that he comprehended what he had undertaken, and Mr. Hodson, one of the examining masters, testified the same opinion by saying to him that the comprehensive and enlightened manner in which he had replied rendered but few questions from him necessary.

‘In every other branch his excellence was the same, and, what is very rare, the examining masters separately thanked him for the pleasure they had received. In his construing of Sophocles, Æschylus, Pindar, and Lucretius, it seemed as if the whole assembly was actuated with one sentiment of applause.

‘He took up such high mathematics as to insure the certainty of getting into the first class for them, which nobody has gained since the late statute altering the modes of examination has been enacted.

‘It would be impossible to assign any one particular branch in which he most excelled, everything was performed in such a masterly manner as gave but one opinion of them all, they could not be exceeded.

‘I am sure you will feel as much pleasure in hearing this as I do in writing it of Peel, and what is still more deserving of praise, his mind, too great and enlightened to be flattered by the testimonies of applause which he has this day received, preserves the same tone as before he was examined. He is a most extraordinary character for abilities, and, believe me, the feelings of his mind render him not less amiable for private intercourse than the greatness of his talents exalts him above other men.

‘You will not, I hope, think this letter untimely. I can assure you, in my opinion, the time is well spent in writing about such a man as Peel.’

To this glowing eulogy one may afford to append an Oxford tradition, that in the famous passage of Lucretius beginning, ‘*Suave, mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis,*’ Peel construed *suave*, ‘It is a source of gratification.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> From Goldwin Smith.

Some years later, when he visited the University as its member, one of the examiners having referred in highly flattering terms to his performance, Peel modestly remarked, 'At this distance of time, Dr. Hodson, I am surprised that you should remember it so well.' 'Mr. Peel,' replied the courtly don, laying his hand upon his heart, 'could I forget?'<sup>3</sup>

From an oration addressed in 1837 to a great Conservative assembly in Glasgow, it appears that after taking his degree at Oxford Mr. Peel 'burned with anxiety to see Scotland,' and, 'hiring in Glasgow a humble but faithful steed, traversed, partly on horseback partly on foot, the best part of the country which lies to the southward of Inverness.' There he was much impressed by the character and intelligence of his mountain guides, and acquired sincere respect for the national system of religious education, and for the Church of Scotland, in whose worship he cordially joined.

Early in the next year Peel came of age to enter Parliament, and within two months thereafter his father bought him a seat for the ancient city of Cashel in Tipperary, for which he was returned on April 15, 1809. He afterwards exchanged Cashel for Chippenham in Wiltshire. Of his first constituency he writes to Lord Liverpool: 'When I sat for Cashel, and was not in office, having made those sacrifices which could then legally be made but now cannot, I did not consider myself at all pledged to the support of Government.' Chippenham, three years later, was secured by the same sort of sacrifices as Cashel.

The session of 1809 came to an early close, and during the two months of it for which Peel was a member he sat silent.<sup>4</sup> Parliament rose on June 21. In the same month Peel entered at Lincoln's Inn. In November he proceeded to take chambers there, and his father writes to him on that occasion in terms implying that he expected his son seriously to engage in the study of the law.

*Sir Robert Peel to Mr. Peel.*

Drayton Manor: Nov. 13, 1809.

'My dear Robert,—I cannot let your servant leave Drayton Manor without sending you a few lines, and acquainting you that we all continue in good health.

<sup>3</sup> From the Rev. Thomas Short. 'He has been praised for 'speaking seldom, and never more than a few words at a time.' But this

appears to be a myth. Hansard shows no trace of it; and his brother says, 'During the session of 1809 he did not take any part in debate.'



‘It will afford me much pleasure to hear from you that you have been introduced to your new society, and that you have a prospect of rooms to your satisfaction. You are engaging in a profession that will render your attainments at school and college of much use, and, if I mistake not, the study of the law will not be found very difficult.

‘You have hitherto afforded me unspeakable pleasure in the manner you have conducted yourself, and I have no fears for the future. Your good sense will convince you of the importance of being distinguished amongst those with whom you live and study, and that by reading men and books you will not fail to rise to eminence in the profession of the law. Can you learn if Parliament is likely to meet before Christmas?’

‘And believe me,

‘Yours affectionately,

‘ROBERT PEEL.’

Peel’s speeches and letters show a good knowledge of the principles of law and of the forms of legislation; indeed, without mastering the principles of criminal law, he could hardly have performed his duties as Home Secretary. But his professional studies cannot have been extensive, for with the next session he began, at the age of twenty-two, his forty years of active public life.

The struggle with France was now at its most dangerous crisis. Europe was at the feet of the victor of Wagram. The Walcheren Expedition had just failed; a ray of hope shone only where Wellington fought in the Peninsula. All other interests were absorbed in the contest, and all parties were united in carrying it on. The men who at its commencement had played the leading parts in Parliament were mostly gone. Pitt, Fox, and Burke had passed from the scene. Perceval was Prime Minister. Canning, Peel’s senior, but his destined rival in the early part of his career, held the first place in debate. Lord John Russell, his later antagonist, did not enter Parliament till some years later. Of his Harrow schoolfellows, Robinson was in his third session, Palmerston had been two years in office, Aberdeen and Byron were in the House of Lords.

Peel was promptly taken up by the Government, and at the opening of the session of 1810 seconded the Address. No letter

of his on that occasion has been preserved, but his own experience was doubtless present to his mind when six years afterwards he wrote :

*Mr. Peel to Sir George Hill.*

‘I had some conversation with Dawson upon the Address. I agreed with him that it was not a good thing for a young man to second it. He gets credit for making a good speech, which he has had time and every other inducement to study, and establishes a character which he is afraid to risk by an extemporaneous essay. The frequent consequence is that he either remains silent or feels dissatisfied if he speaks, because he does not succeed so well the second time as he did the first.’

The speech, relating entirely to the military situation and policy, was delivered to a crowded House and crowded galleries, for the Government, imperilled by the failure of the Walcheren Expedition, had anxiously collected all their supporters, and public excitement was at a high pitch. That Peel should have been chosen under such circumstances to play a leading part shows that he was regarded by his party as a very promising man. His performance seems to have given general satisfaction. Mr. William Peel, who was present, writes :

‘Accompanied by my brother-in-law, then Mr. Cockburn, and my brother’s first tutor, the resident Curate of Bury, I went into the gallery of the House of Commons to hear him speak.

‘That speech I have in his handwriting. It must have come into my possession in 1819, when I was about to perform the same duty of seconding the Address, and asked him what he advised me to do in the way of preparation. “Write down,” he answered, “every word you mean to say, as I did in 1810.”

‘I doubt whether anyone got more credit than he did in moving or seconding an Address. My father took his place in the gallery opposite to where my brother stood. The tears rolled down his cheeks as he heard the cheers with which the speech was received.’

A further record has been preserved in a letter from the father to an old friend.

*Sir Robert Peel to Rev. Richard Davies.*<sup>5</sup>

‘From the interest you always take in the welfare of my family, you will be pleased to hear that my son’s first speech in Parliament was judged to be, by men the best qualified to form a correct opinion of public speaking, the best first speech since that of Mr. Pitt.

‘The Speaker and the leading members on both sides of the House concurred in this opinion. You would have been pleased with his address and language, and he was about forty minutes on his legs without being in the least embarrassed.

‘I have been congratulated by members alike entertaining different political opinions, as he said nothing which could give offence. He has already raised himself a character which in future may be highly useful to him, if his health is preserved, and he should feel attached to the study of politics.’

A letter signed ‘C. J.’ (Cyril Jackson) shows with what interest Peel’s first public appearance had been watched by the late head of his college, and by other Oxford friends :

‘Felpham, near Chichester : Jan. 28, 1810.

‘Though I have dismissed Christ Church in the general totally and entirely from my thoughts, yet I have not divested myself, nor do I wish to do so, of the interest which I took in the well-doing of those whom I generally valued.

‘Whether you are one of such number or not you can perhaps form a tolerable guess. Other people certainly seem to think you are, for I have received half a dozen letters on the subject of last Tuesday night, and most of them are from persons on whose judgment I can depend.

‘I do therefore most graciously condescend to tell you

<sup>5</sup> Communicated by James A. Campbell, M.P.

that I am very much pleased—more than I thought I could have been with anything of the sort—and if I had you here I would feed you with ling and cranberry tart.

‘Now remember what I say. Give the last high finish to all that you now possess by the continual reading of Homer. Let no day pass without your having him in your hands. Elevate your own mind by the continual meditation of the vastness of his comprehension and the unerring accuracy of all his conceptions. If you will but read him four or five times over every year, in half a dozen years you will know him by heart, and he well deserves it. He alone of mortal men thoroughly understood the human mind. He alone possesses the great secret of knowing how far ornament should be carried, what degree of it gives strength to a sentiment, and what overwhelms and oppresses it.’

To the Minister who had brought his son forward, the father returned thanks in modest terms, but not without a hint at further employment for him.

*Sir Robert Peel to Mr. Perceval.*

‘If my son has the good fortune to be honoured with your confidence, I flatter myself he will be found deserving of the trust reposed in him. He possesses capacity, industry, and virtuous habits; and, under the guidance of a judicious and well-informed friend, he may become a useful member of society.’

The last sentence may seem to lend colour to an anecdote told by Guizot, that Sir Robert Peel had discovered in his son tendencies to Whig opinions, and warned Lord Liverpool that to make sure of his support it would be well to place him early in harness. But others of his family saw in him no such inclination. Sir Lawrence Peel’s father, while admiring the young man’s courage and independence in praising highly the ability of Bonaparte, wished that Robert were as liberal in his home as in his foreign politics. And Mr. William Peel, while believing that his father admonished Robert on the importance of steadily supporting the Government, adds, ‘I do not think my father had any great fear of my brother’s politics

taking too liberal a turn. For myself, I never had the slightest reason to suspect my brother of Whiggery through his whole life.'

On March 30 Peel again spoke, in defence of the Walcheren Expedition, judiciously dwelling rather on the importance of the object than on the conduct or results of the undertaking. 'What would have been said,' he asked, 'had the Government announced that they had been deterred by the difficulties to be encountered? If the House was prepared to give its sanction to such doctrine, if this tame spiritless calculation of the risk became the criterion of national enterprise, at once let it obliterate from the proud pages of its history the memory and the mention of all its heroic deeds.'

This second speech was also well received, and elicited characteristic praise and exhortation from the same quarter as the first.

'Felpham : Sunday, April 1, 1810.

'My dear Sir,—I learnt by to-day's post from those on whom I can depend, that on Friday night you surpassed your former self, to use the very expression of one of the letters I have received. I suppose, therefore, you have been reading Homer. I have only one conclusion to draw, and I trust and believe it is your conclusion also.

'Work very hard and unremittingly. Work, as I used to say sometimes, like a tiger, or like a dragon, if dragons work more and harder than tigers.

'Don't be afraid of killing yourself. Only retain, which is essential, your former temperance and exercise, and your aversion to mere lounge, and then you will have abundant time both for hard work and company, which last is as necessary to your future situation as even the hard work I speak of, and as much is to be got from it.

'Be assured that I shall pursue you, as long as I live, with a jealous and watchful eye. Woe be to you if you fail me!

'I trust and hope you will not be tempted to take employment too early, nor any, at any time, but what is really efficient and of high consideration. Therefore wait till the time for that is come.

'C. J.'

The time had come for an offer from Mr. Perceval of the Under-Secretaryship for War and the Colonies, which Peel accepted, to satisfy his father, as appears from the following note left by Lord Cardwell :

‘ Haddo: Oct. 12, 1850.

‘ Mr. William Bathurst told us that in 1810 he met Mr. Peel, and congratulated him on his appointment as Under Secretary. Mr. Peel said he thought it no subject for congratulation, that he only accepted it in deference to his father, and wished to have been free to form his own opinion independently upon it.’

Of his short service in the Colonial Department his papers furnish hardly any record. In a general memorandum are these few words :

‘ In the preceding years I was Under Secretary of State<sup>6</sup> in the Colonial Office, for the chief part of the time with the Earl of Liverpool, and for the remainder with Lord Bathurst. On my appointment Lord Liverpool expressed a wish that I should occupy a small house which, though a detached dwelling, formed part of the building of his own residence, Fife House. I retained it until I exchanged my appointment in the Colonial Office for that in Ireland.’

Mr. William Peel writes :

‘ When my brother became Under Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Lord Liverpool, being Secretary of State, allowed him to live in a house adjoining his own. My brother furnished the house at considerable expense. The door looked into Scotland Yard. It was my home whenever I was in London in the years 1810, 1811, and part of 1812.

‘ My brother gave frequent dinner parties to official men of his own standing in the House of Commons—Croker, Goulburn, Fitzgerald, Richard Wellesley, Lord Desart, Manners Sutton, Lord Palmerston, and to other unofficial

<sup>6</sup> Sir Lawrence Peel states that Mr. Peel's first connection with office was as private secretary to Lord

Liverpool, but there is no trace of this in Mr. Peel's papers, or in Lord Liverpool's.

supporters of the Government. Occasionally he invited one or two of his old college friends—Shaw Stewart, W. Knatchbull, and John Mills. But the parties were less pleasant to those who did not take any deep interest in politics, as the conversation was almost exclusively political.’

No doubt at the Colonial Office Peel acquired experience in administration which was useful to him afterwards, both in Ireland and when, as Prime Minister, he had to guide all the departments. The Colonial Secretary was at that time also Secretary for War. Details, such as are now dealt with at the War Office, were then left chiefly to subordinate departments, and to the Secretary *at* War, a financial officer at the Treasury, at this time Lord Palmerston, who held the post for nearly twenty years. The Secretary *for* War had to shape the general war policy, and to direct the great military operations in which the country was then engaged. Lord Liverpool, who had also been Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary, took a very active interest in military affairs in Spain and elsewhere. From the letters it appears that this interest was shared by Mr. Peel, who never fails when his old department distinguishes itself to express satisfaction.

In the following session, March 1811, he spoke in favour of taking Portuguese troops into British pay, and was led into a general defence of the war and of Wellington. ‘Perhaps at this very hour, while they were deliberating on the vote which they should give, Lord Wellington might be preparing for action to-morrow; and when he reflected on the venal abuse which had been disseminated against that illustrious character, he felt a hope that, if a momentary irritation should ruffle his temper on seeing those malicious effusions, he would console himself by the general feeling which existed in his favour. For his country would remember that he had resigned every comfort in order to fight her battles and defend her liberties; nor would his glory be tarnished by the envy of rivals or the voice of faction. He cherished the sanguine expectation that the day would soon arrive, when another transcendent victory would silence the tongue of envy and the cavils of party animosity, when the British commander would be hailed by the unanimous voice of his country, with the sentiment addressed on a memorable occasion to another illustrious character: “*Invidiam gloriâ superâsti.*” ’

In May 1812 the Prime Minister, Mr. Perceval, was murdered. Changes of course ensued. Attempts were made to strengthen

the Government by bringing in Mr. Canning as Foreign Secretary, with Lord Wellesley as Lord Lieutenant in Ireland. This overture Mr. Canning at first entertained, but afterwards declined. The chief apparent obstacle to the coalition was the determination of the Cabinet to persevere in their opposition to Catholic Emancipation, and to make Lord Castlereagh leader in the Commons. Lord Wellesley and Mr. Canning next tried themselves to form a Government, but failed, being unable to secure the support of Lord Grenville and Lord Grey, who were opposed to the Peninsular War. Lord Grenville and Lord Grey in their turn failed, owing to a quarrel about the household offices.

In the end the reconstruction of the old Administration was entrusted to Lord Liverpool, under whom for fifteen years friends of Catholic Emancipation and its opponents consented to sit in the Cabinet together. His modest estimate of the situation may still be read with interest, especially as regards the prospects of his junior colleagues.

‘I have had no resource but to bring forward the most promising of the young men, on whose exertions the fate of the Government in the House of Commons will very much depend. I should be most happy to see another Pitt amongst them. I would most willingly resign the Government into his hands, for I am fully aware of the importance of the Minister being, if possible, in the House of Commons.

‘I can assure you I never sought the situation in which I find myself placed; but having accepted it from a sense of public duty, I am determined to do my utmost for the service of the Prince Regent as long as I have reason to believe I possess his confidence, and at all events I will endeavour to keep that party together which affords the only security either to the Crown or to the people against the complete and uncontrolled dominion of the Opposition.’

Under this Administration Mr. Peel became Chief Secretary for Ireland in July 1812, and in August was sworn in as a member of the Privy Council. The Prime Minister's letter introducing him is interesting from the points of character selected for commendation.



*Lord Liverpool to the Duke of Richmond.*

‘Fife House: Aug. 1, 1812.

‘My dear Duke,—I desired Lord Bathurst a few days ago to inform you that if certain negotiations, which were then depending, and of which you were informed, should prove unsuccessful, it was my intention to propose the situation of Secretary for Ireland to Mr. Peel. I have now to acquaint you that I have proposed it to him by the authority of the Prince Regent, and that he has accepted it. I can speak with more confidence of Mr. Peel than I could of most persons to whom such an office might be offered. He has been under me in the Secretary of State’s office for two years, and has acquired all the necessary habits of official business. He has a particularly good temper, and great frankness and openness of manners, which I know are particularly desirable on your side of the water. He acquired great reputation, as you must have heard, as a scholar at Oxford, and he has distinguished himself in the House of Commons on every occasion on which he has had an opportunity of speaking. I have the greatest hopes, therefore, that this appointment will prove acceptable to you and advantageous to the Government.’

The negotiations referred to were with Canning, who might have had the Lord-Lieutenancy for Lord Wellesley, and the Irish Secretaryship for another friend. It had been offered also to Lord Palmerston, who preferred remaining Secretary at War.

Following the Prime Minister’s example, Mr. Peel himself wrote to inform the Duke of his appointment, adding :

‘I can assure your Grace that I am by no means unconscious of the many disqualifications under which I labour in undertaking the duties of this situation. All that I can oppose to them is a most anxious desire to acquit myself to the satisfaction of those under whom I am to be employed, and to prove myself not unworthy of their confidence.’

The Duke, who had observed Mr. Peel’s votes and speeches, replied warmly :

'Phoenix Park: Aug. 4, 1812.

'Though I have not the pleasure of being personally acquainted with you, I assure you Lord Liverpool could not have found a person in the House of Commons whom I would rather appoint to the office of Chief Secretary in Ireland. I have no sort of doubt of our going on well together, as I believe we are inclined to act exactly on the same principles.'

To which Mr. Peel responds:

'The opportunity which Lord Sidmouth has afforded me of reading the several communications which have been made by your Grace to the Home Department, in the recent events connected with the political state of Ireland, confirms the confidence which previously I had, that I should have the satisfaction of completely according in the principles upon which the government of Ireland has been conducted.'

A letter of congratulation from a friend, who happened to be staying at the Viceregal Lodge, gives further proof of the Duke's satisfaction.

*Lord Apsley*<sup>7</sup> to Mr. Peel.

'The Duke of Richmond has just shown me a letter from you, announcing your appointment as Secretary for Ireland.

'As the office is in his gift, Lord Liverpool should not have submitted you for the Regent's, but for his approbation, which, I assure you, you most fully have. But, as in an official letter he will probably not express himself so strongly as he has just privately done to me, I cannot help repeating it to you, as it must make your commencement with him more pleasant to you. From what he has heard of you he says he very much prefers you to all who have been talked of as likely to fill the situation.'

<sup>7</sup> Eldest son of the Colonial Secretary, Lord Bathurst.

## CHAPTER II.

1812-1813.

First Acquaintance with Ireland—The Viceroy and the Castle Staff—Making a new Parliament—Curwen's Act—Risk in representing Cashel—Chippenham—Romantic Refusal to barter Peerages for Seats—Third Parties—A Protestant Champion—A delicate Situation—A venal Borough—Political Patronage—An Irish Industry—Martyrs—Debts of Gratitude—A Battle for Promotion by Merit—A Job—Greed of Irish Officials—The new Parliament, First Impressions.

IRELAND, when Mr. Peel, in September 1812, aged twenty-four, arrived there as Chief Secretary, was to him an almost unknown country.

For three years he had been an Irish member, but his father having bought the seat for him, he had found no occasion to visit his constituents or to hold communication with them. For information, and for traditions of Irish policy, he had to depend at first mainly on the Viceroy and the staff of Dublin Castle.

The Viceroy, however, having served five years, and being about to quit Ireland (where in fact he stayed but ten months longer), was soon content to leave most business to his able colleague, and at the Castle the permanent Secretary of the Civil Department took the opportunity of a change of masters to resign. Under such circumstances the fresh vigour and high character of the new Chief Secretary, his inborn aptitude for business, his invariable courtesy and fairness, soon fixed his position as the real ruler of Ireland. Successive Lords Lieutenant reigned, Mr. Peel governed.

His 'Private and Confidential Letters' for six years (1812-1818) fill sixteen volumes. The earliest relate to the appointment of a new Under Secretary, and show that on such a question Peel meant to be consulted, and wished to import his chief coadjutor from England.

Addressing a friend, then Under Secretary at the Home Office, after stating the salary in Dublin as about 2,500*l.* with the house in Phoenix Park, allowances, &c., he writes :

*Mr. Peel to Mr. J. Beckett.*

‘Sept. 5, 1812.

‘Now, my dear Beckett, let me know what you think of this. Nothing would give me more real pleasure than if you could be induced to come here. Remember that I want you, as far as I am concerned, to act with, not under me. The Duke knows nothing of this application, and I only wish to be prepared in case he should consult me. My chief motive for writing is the anxiety I feel to act with one for whom I have such a real regard, and of whom I have so high an opinion.’

Mr. Beckett having with thanks declined the offer, hinting also that the Home Secretary might propose a friend, Peel replies:

*Mr. Peel to Mr. J. Beckett.*

‘Sept. 14, 1812.

‘Lord Sidmouth himself apprised me that he was favourably disposed to Mr. Hawthorne. I do not know him; indeed, I have not seen him; but should any objections occur to me to his appointment, or should I feel a decided preference in favour of any other individual on public grounds, I should have no difficulty, of course, in stating this to Lord Sidmouth. Whoever is appointed, I must have confidence in him. There is but one alternative, and I should adopt it without a moment’s hesitation.’

Lord Sidmouth did not press the claims of his candidate, and the post was given to Mr. Gregory (till then a Commissioner of Excise), with whom, under successive Viceroys, Mr. Peel maintained intimate personal relations.

Among the confidential letters on Irish questions exchanged with Lord Sidmouth, through whom Mr. Peel communicated officially with the Cabinet, those of special interest are few, presenting therein a contrast to the copious and important private correspondence kept up in later years between Peel himself as Home Secretary and his successors in Ireland.

With the Prime Minister, under whom he had served for two years at the Colonial Office, his intercourse was full and free.

The chief topics at first were the fortunes in war of Wellington and Bonaparte, and the important business of electing a new Parliament, which for the time engrossed the Chief Secretary's attention.

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

‘Fife House : Sept. 10, 1812.

‘My dear Peel,—I had never the least doubt that you would be pleased with the Duke of Richmond, and that he would have every reason to be satisfied with your appointment. I trust he may be induced to remain in Ireland till the spring of next year. Indeed, it would be particularly awkward to make any change in the Government till the Catholic question is brought to some issue, and I am confident that, whenever a change is made, we may in vain look for a successor who will give equal satisfaction to all classes of the King's subjects.

‘Since you left us we have had a continued succession of good news, the entrance into Madrid, the capture of Astorge yesterday, and the official account of the raising the siege of Cadiz to-day. In short, the prospect in the Peninsula was never so brilliant, and I trust the campaign will not close without the French being driven at least across the Ebro.

‘Ever most affectionately yours,

‘LIVERPOOL.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘Sept. 14, 1812.

‘I assure you that we fully participated in your joy at all the good news which you have sent us from the Peninsula, and I think we attribute to it in a great degree the extraordinary tranquillity of this country in every part of it.

‘The prospect of the Duke of Richmond's stay gives me the greatest possible satisfaction. Indeed, if he left us, as Sir Charles Saxton is about shortly to resign his situation, a new Lord Lieutenant, Chief, and Under Secretary would find themselves, I fear, much embarrassed should any difficulties arise.’

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

' Fife House : Sept. 22, 1812.

' I believe I can now say that a Privy Council will be held for the dissolution of Parliament on Monday next, the 29th inst.

' You will of course send us all the information you may obtain, and make every exertion which can be safely made for the support and assistance of our friends. We are placed, however, under considerable difficulties in consequence of Curwen's Bill, and it will be absolutely necessary that we should so conduct ourselves, both in Great Britain and Ireland, as to be able distinctly to state that we have been no parties to any money transactions whatever between those who may have influence in boroughs and the persons who may be elected to represent them.

' What the persons will do under the present circumstances who have hitherto sold their interest it is difficult to say ; but whatever may be the conduct of private individuals, it cannot be either safe or proper for Government to embark in any transaction which could be considered as a violation of an Act of Parliament, and of an Act of Parliament so recently passed. There can be no necessity, however, for our being precluded from recommending individuals as well in the instances of close boroughs as in those of popular elections, and the arrangements incident to the election must in those cases be understood between the parties without reference to Government, except what may arise from the fair patronage and influence which they must always possess.'

In such affairs Peel was as yet without experience, the last general election (1807) having been in his undergraduate days, and his own election (1809) having been arranged for him by his father.

The Act (49 Geo. III. c. 118) somewhat oddly cited as 'Curwen's Bill' had recently been passed to check the sale of seats. It provides that any person giving, or promising to give, or consenting to the gift of any money, office, or employment,

to procure a return to serve in Parliament for any place, shall, if not returned, forfeit for each such gift or promise 1,000*l.*, and if returned, shall be incapacitated to serve in that Parliament for that place.

In the Commons, Windham and others had hotly opposed the Bill, and Sir F. Burdett was called to order for declaring that an assembly who thus avowed their own corruption represented, some the Treasury, some their patrons, some their own money, but not the Commons of England.

The reform was warmly supported in Committee by the Speaker (Abbot), who declared the question to be 'whether the seats in this House shall be henceforth publicly saleable;' and intimated his firm persuasion that, if the Bill were rejected, they would see seats advertised for public auction. The purchase of seats by offices, he said, was an offence against the law of Parliament, and in his opinion punishable as a misdemeanour at common law. Mr. Perceval's Government did not oppose the Bill, but carried an amendment limiting the penalty for corruption by promising office to cases of 'express' contract, so as not to make illegal 'honourable understandings' and 'debts of gratitude.'

The whole Act appears to have been commonly regarded in 1812 much as a later generation regarded the Act 49 Geo. III. c. 126, prohibiting over-regulation prices for commissions in the army. In either case forbidden bargains were habitual and notorious. Ostensibly the law was obeyed, practically it was taken to mean 'Thou shalt not be found out.'

For a Government to be found out was serious. Hence the Prime Minister's admonition. Lord Liverpool, who had himself carried the Bill through the Upper House, recognises the impropriety of disregarding a recent statute, but sees no objection on the ground of morality or honour. Such for many years yet to come was the prevailing sentiment, and on both sides—among the Reformers as well as among the Tories—until the nomination boroughs were abolished, the sale of seats went on. A young member of the Government had little option but to serve his party in all such ways as the public conscience then approved. Thus to the usual pecuniary transactions in Irish close boroughs, officially Peel shut his eyes and stopped his ears. Personally he gave up Cashel, but\*looked to friends to find for him a similar seat in England, and to his father to complete 'the arrangements incident to the election.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘Sept. 29, 1812.

‘I have given up all thoughts of representing Cashel myself, as I think the risk would be too great.

‘I have written to my father intimating to him the impossibility of procuring my return by the grant or promise of pecuniary consideration. The Government have so many friends to provide for, whose circumstances give them stronger claims than mine upon their assistance in procuring a return, that I will make great sacrifices to prevent the necessity of troubling you on my account. I have no doubt my father would purchase the permanent interest in a borough, if he could procure it, with a certainty of success. I shall trust to him for my own election.’

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

‘(Private.)

‘Fife House: Oct. 1, 1812.

‘With respect to all official persons it has been thought necessary that they should be elected for places to which no imputation can attach under Curwen’s Act.

‘Long will write to you on the subject of your own election, which he believes he has secured for Chippenham.’

*Mr. Peel to Right Hon. C. Long.*

‘Oct. 5, 1812.

‘I have just received your letter on the subject of my election for Chippenham. I conclude, of course, that it is my father’s intention to purchase Maitland’s entire interest in the borough. I am very much obliged to you for the trouble you have had in this affair.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Arbuthnot (Secretary to the Treasury).*

‘Oct. 5, 1812.

‘I have been very cautious in all proceedings here. Judge Day has the management of Tralee for Sir E. Denny, the proprietor. I have hitherto had no opportunity of ascertaining the judge’s intentions. This sort of business is so new to me that my head, like yours, is rather apt to be confused.’



*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

‘Fife House: Oct. 7, 1812.

‘The news from America is most satisfactory. This was our weak side, and I have no doubt that by good management we shall be able to turn the tables on the Yankees.

‘Lord Cathcart’s account of the battle<sup>1</sup> between the Russians and the French on September 7 is very satisfactory. There exists, as all our letters confirm, the best possible spirit in Russia, and if the Government will persevere for a month or six weeks longer, Bonaparte will be under difficulties<sup>2</sup> which he has never yet experienced. It is a comfort to reflect that he is now nearly eight hundred miles from the Russian frontier.’

The vacancy at Cashel was satisfactorily filled, and the Prime Minister withstood the temptation to buy another Irish borough seat for an English peerage.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘Oct. 6, 1812.

‘Sir C. Saxton, who, you are of course aware, has resigned the situation of Under Secretary in the Civil Department, wishes to come into Parliament, and would have no objection to sit for Cashel. His disposition is favourable towards Government, and I have every reason to believe that he would give it his support. I am satisfied that you cannot receive any which would be more creditable to the Government than Saxton’s.’

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

‘Oct. 9, 1812.

‘I have not the least objection to Sir Charles Saxton being elected for Cashel. You may assure him from me that I only expect from my friends a generally favourable

<sup>1</sup> The battle of Borodino, bloody but indecisive. Next day the Russian troops fell back on Moscow.

<sup>2</sup> Sept. 16, Moscow was in flames. Oct. 25, Napoleon began his disastrous retreat.

disposition, and that I shall never attempt to 'interfere with his right to vote as he may think consistent with his duty upon any particular question.

'I am most happy to be able to assure you that I hear from all quarters the most satisfactory accounts of your success and popularity in Ireland. You will readily believe that no person can be more gratified by these accounts than myself.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

'Dublin: Oct. 8.

'Lord —— has made as yet no arrangements for the return for ——. His object is an English peerage, and if he had encouragement to expect that his claim to that distinction would be favourably considered when an opportunity shall offer, he would be inclined to offer the free return to Government for this election.'

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

'(Private and confidential.)

'London: Oct. 10, 1812.

'I do not see how it is possible for me to hold out the expectations suggested to Lord ——.

'I could have had four seats from Sir ——, and three from Sir ——, if I would have promised them they should have been made peers upon the first creation. I have lost them, but I would rather lose than make such an engagement, and, though it has been intimated to me that without an engagement I might hold out the expectation that it might be a consequence, I have always felt that such a course of proceeding was either a virtual engagement in itself, or an act of deception. I would rather lose a few votes than involve myself in any such dilemma.

'I know that there are engagements not more creditable and less advantageous, but these were not made by me, and I am particularly solicitous to avoid adding to engagements of this description. You must do the best you can without the promise of an English peerage.

'Do not suppose me too romantic from the first part of

my letter, but (independent of my indifference to office unless I can hold it creditably) I am satisfied that a disposition to contract engagements of this description will in the end rather weaken than strengthen any Government.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

'Oct. 14, 1812.

'Lord —— expressed his willingness to take the chance of the peerage and give us the return for the borough, but I distinctly told him that I would not accept it if it was offered with any hope that he would get the peerage.

'I entirely concur with you in deprecating that sort of answer to applications of this kind which, while it professes to make no positive engagement, makes a virtual one, which cannot be broken without a gross deception on the party to whom it was given.

'In this very instance we might get —— by such an answer, but both the Duke and myself would rather see the borough represented by the most decided enemy.'

The following letters throw light on the somewhat complex relations at this time of parliamentary parties.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

'Oct. 27, 1812.

'Colonel Foster says that he considers Colonel Ogle, the present member for Drogheda, to stand in his shoes in Parliament. Ogle is from inclination with the Opposition, and is decidedly pledged on the Catholic question; but in order to secure his return he gave a promise to Foster that he would support us on every other but the Catholic question.

'I confess it appears to me that, assuming that seats at the Treasury Board should be reserved for those who are members of Parliament, this sort of deputation should not be admitted as a claim for continuing in that office.

'The Duke is of the same opinion, and had some conversation with Foster on the subject this day. We wish

to have your sentiments upon it, and I shall be governed by them. We are the more particular in requesting to be favoured with them as the Fosters are not, I think, very well satisfied with the Irish Government.'

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

*(Private and confidential.)*

Walmer Castle: Nov. 1, 1812.

'We must upon this occasion pay some attention to prudential considerations, which arise out of the present state of parties. Our danger is not from Opposition, but evidently from the third parties headed by Lord Wellesley and Canning, who will represent themselves as holding the same opinions as we do on all popular topics, who will say that they have as much right to be considered as the successors of Mr. Pitt's party as ourselves, and whose object will consequently be to detach as many of our friends as possible.

'The practical question in the House of Commons for the next session will be, Who are the true Demetriuses? and on the issue of that question the fate of the Administration will in a great measure depend. I am fully aware that the necessity they will be under of acting with the Opposition on any question on which they wish to put us in a minority will give us great advantages, if proper use is made of them; but it must be our main object to commit our friends upon some important question of national policy, and until they are committed we cannot know with certainty who are really to be trusted.

'I have already heard of two or three who have been refused what could not be granted, and who have announced in consequence their intention of joining the Neutral Squad. I think it by no means clear that they will carry this intention into effect, but I mention it for the purpose of illustrating the game which I am sure we shall see playing by all the shabby people of the party. Under these circumstances I think we should avoid, if possible, offending the Foster connection.

'Your report on the state of the elections in Ireland is

very satisfactory, and more than meets our most sanguine expectations. We have been very lucky in our popular elections in England. The result appears to be that the Burdettites lose considerably. The Opposition lose in numbers, and they lose for the present Romilly, Brougham, Tierney, Horner, and William Lamb. Canning loses seven. Lord Wellesley gains nearly as many. 'We shall gain in England the difference of between thirty and forty.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

'Nov. 1, 1812.

'Croker tells me that Canning and Lord Wellesley have forty members in the new Parliament. I hope his sole authority is the "Morning Chronicle."'

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

'Fife House: Nov. 7, 1812.

'Croker is entirely misinformed. Canning has lost by the dissolution seven, and Lord Wellesley has not gained as many. Upon the most favourable calculation for them which I have seen I cannot make their parties more than twenty, or at most twenty-five.'

While using every lawful exertion, in the making of the new Parliament, for the general interest of his party, Mr. Peel was not less mindful of individual claims. The following letters show how generously the young Minister respected the claims of a veteran Protestant champion, and how zealously in his private capacity he cared for personal friends.

*Mr. Peel to the Attorney-General (Saurin).*

'Dublin Castle: Oct. 2, 1812.

'I entirely agree with you in your opinion upon the service which the Protestant cause would derive from the active exertions of an Irishman in the House of Commons, who would share with Dr. Duigenan in zeal but would temper it with a little more discretion. At the same time

I must own that I could never bring myself to propose to Dr. Duigenan to resign his seat in Parliament, after all his labours, and all his persecutions for righteousness' sake, and all the obloquy he has braved and will brave in the cause of the Protestant Ascendency. I think he should consult his own inclinations exclusively in retiring from the field. I would not only let him consult them, but I would really wish that he might feel an impression that the Government were sensible, I had almost said of his services, and that they would lend him a hand in buckling on his cumbrous armour for another encounter.'

*Mr. Peel to the Earl of Desart.*

'Oct. 19, 1812.

'I will do all that I possibly can for you, and, if certain complex arrangements which I am now making on your account turn out favourably, I am not without hope that you may still look forward to a seat in St. Stephen's.

'Do not, in any letters either to me or Lord Liverpool, advert in the slightest degree to any pecuniary negotiations. It is absolutely necessary that we should keep perfectly clear from them, and that we should be enabled to state *bonâ fide* that the Government have been no party to them and have had no concern whatever with them.

'Yours ever most affectionately,

'ROBERT PEEL.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Apsley.*

'Oct. 29, 1812.

'You are doubtless aware that Sir Charles Saxton, in addition to his return for Malmesbury, has secured the good-will of the respectable voters of Cashel by those popular arts and professions which no good subject should resort to. However he has done it, and appears in the double capacity of a citizen and a burgess. It so happens that Desart has a friend upon his hands (having secured his own return for Bossiney on the condition of bringing that gentleman into Parliament) who is neither citizen nor

burgess, nor likely to become so unless Desart can secure to him a reversionary interest in one of the two places for which Saxton is returned.

‘Saxton will, I have no doubt, prefer to sit for Cashel. If therefore the well-known political integrity of Mr. William Robert Newman, of the parish of Stoke Gabriel, Devon (Desart’s friend), could recommend him on the meeting of Parliament to the electors of Malmesbury, Desart might retain his seat for Bossiney, which otherwise he must vacate. Desart’s object, as he delicately insinuates, is to be put in communication with Mr. Pitt [the patron].’

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

‘Admiralty : Sept. 28, 1812.

‘I do not know how Arbuthnot and Lord Liverpool are to get through it, but I understand that there are great perplexities, and that Curwen’s Bill is not quite the *caput mortuum* that people supposed. I always thought that the effect of such measures of reform must be to throw the boroughs into the hands of mere adventurers, who will stick at nothing to get in, to the exclusion of those who have any scruples.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

‘Oct. 1, 1812.

‘I have written to my father about my own election, as I hold that there are many others who have stronger claims upon the assistance of Government than mine. Indeed, I should be very anxious to avoid adding to the trouble which Lord Liverpool and Arbuthnot have to wade through.

‘I am placed in a delicate situation enough here, bound to secure the Government interests, if possible, from dilapidation, but still more bound to faint with horror at the mention of money transactions, to threaten the unfortunate culprits with impeachment if they hint at an impure return, and yet to prevent those strongholds Cashel, Mallow, and Tralee from surrendering to the enemies who besiege them.’

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Oct. 8, 1812.

‘ Pray just say whether you would, as my private friend, advise me to proceed at Down, and to incur the expense, which is calculated at 2,000*l.*’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

‘ Dublin Castle: Oct. 9, 1812.

‘ I think it undoubtedly for the interest of Government that you should persevere. But I feel some difficulty in giving you advice as a private friend in regard to the expense which it would be prudent for you to incur. It must depend a great deal upon your own feeling upon this point. How far is a man in a high official situation<sup>3</sup> bound to do all he can to provide himself with a seat in Parliament? I own that I feel in my own case that every exertion should be made by me to secure my own election. If I failed I presume the Government would offer me its assistance, and that I should have a claim upon it. But I should certainly not prefer it till I had proved my willingness to make every reasonable sacrifice to provide myself with a seat in Parliament. That is my feeling upon the subject, and I have acted upon it in this very instance, as Lord Liverpool desired me to have myself returned for an unobjectionable Irish borough, which I have not done.

‘ If you fail at Down, having made as good a fight as you can, your claim on the Government will, I think, be irresistible. But I think if I were in your place I would make the fight.’

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

‘ (*Confidential.*)

‘ Friday.

‘ I find the borough [Down] extremely well disposed to me. Of the respectable and steady people I have a decided majority, not less than twenty. But there are sixty-two persons who are extremely doubtful. Of these sixty-two

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Croker was Secretary to the Admiralty.



some few are respectable, and will probably give me an honest support, but the votes of the great majority of these must be had by money, or places.

‘I have the greatest repugnance to bribery, and in neither of my former elections could I approve it. Nor can I now, but my agent informs me that many voters will require money, and that without a compliance with this request I shall do no good. The return absolutely depends upon pounds sterling. The best computation which my agents can make is that 2,000*l.* will be necessary. Now I have no such sum, nor is it expected from me. Government on such occasions often interfere, and though I know that you on this side have not extensive means, yet I suppose you have some, and Arbuthnot has more.

‘The natural expenses will be 500*l.* These I think I am bound to make good. But with regard to the money for votes, that I expect from Government. If Government will not do it, I am satisfied as far as relates to me, though we shall lose the return. But if they consent, and will authorise me to expect 2,000*l.*, I shall go on certain of the return. This latter I hope will be the case, as Arbuthnot led me to believe. It would be of the greatest importance that I should have at least 1,000*l.* by return of post.

‘My opponents have certainly got together a considerable sum, and are pretty liberal of it. They have open houses already, and I am told that they think a vote not too dear at 60*l.*

‘I hope on Friday to enable you to settle Holford’s business as you wished. God bless you.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

‘Dublin: Oct. 10, 1812.

‘It is quite impossible for me to be answerable for Government in England. You say on this side we have no extensive means. We have none; we are anticipating at this moment. We received 1,000*l.* yesterday, not a farthing of which is left. I would have sent you 1,000*l.* as a private concern between ourselves, with no reference whatever to

Government, if I had it, but I have it not. If you think proper to take the chance whether it will assist you, you can promise.'

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'Oct. 13, 1812.

'I find that Hawthorne is giving money at a great rate, and I begin to think that he may effect his purpose by those means. I have been most guarded in my expenses, and have expressly forbidden in a way to be obeyed all money transactions. With regard to the promising of places and employments, I do assure you that I have given the most positive directions against any such thing.'

'Oct. 16.—One thing I must beg of you to bear in mind, which is, that I must have a few of the small places in your gift, for some poor and honest fellows who, though they have not asked me, are, I think, in honour entitled to my gratitude. But in this I shall not draw heavily upon you.'

Closely associated with the parliamentary elections, which soon were over, was the perpetual and irksome but vitally important task of so distributing the Castle favours as to conciliate and retain the most support.

Patronage, in most times and in most countries an acknowledged source of influence, was in Peel's time and in Ireland an engine of government so necessary that it must be understood and used by one who meant to govern.

The Chief Secretary being practically also patronage secretary, and the country being ruled largely by ascendancy of class and creed and methodised corruption, one of his first duties was to keep together the more venal adherents of the party in power, by promising from time to time, and as occasion offered paying to each man his price.

For this purpose, as regards the greater county potentates, Mr. Peel's chief guide at first appears to have been a confidential paper bequeathed to him by a predecessor. Sir Arthur Wellesley, in his own handwriting, had drawn up a list of counties, registering in each the families of greatest influence, their 'objects,' and the favours they had received, with occasional remarks when for the present they ought to be content. To a young adminis-

trative hand this was a useful manual, soon supplemented by his own experience. Another book records the politics of members, their family connections, and the patronage bestowed on them.

At all times, but especially (which was Peel's first Irish experience in 1812 and his last in 1818) before and during a general election, the Chief Secretary had to confront a pitiless and pelting storm of applications, written and oral. Of the few Irish industries by which it was possible to earn a living, to a large class the most congenial was that of founding claims to be urged, first on borough or county members, peers spiritual and temporal, or other persons of influence, and afterwards by them upon the Government. Daily Mr. Peel was beset with importunities for posts as gaugers, hearth-money collectors, revenue clerks, stamp distributors &c., not chiefly from the candidates themselves, but in larger numbers from persons of position and rank, recommending the applicants either from family reasons, or more frequently to oblige constituents and electioneering agents. Another class of suitors solicited, for themselves or for their relatives and friends, preferments in the Church, livings, deaneries, bishoprics. Others sought the power, or even claimed it as a right, to appoint the Sheriff for their respective counties, a matter of great consequence. Others again preferred requests for peerages, for steps in the peerage, or for Government support in the election of representative peers.

In dealing with these petitioners Mr. Peel had one advantage, owing to which and to his personal character his advent to office began in some sort a new era of administration. Most of his predecessors having been connected with the noble families of Ireland, the needy aristocracy and gentry of the country had availed themselves of their intimate relations with the Secretary to extort more places from the Government, bishoprics and deaneries and the higher official appointments for their sons, brothers, nephews, and friends, the lower revenue offices, gaugerships, messengerships &c., for their illegitimate sons and discarded servants.

Mr. Peel, on the contrary, came into office untrammelled by Irish friendships or Irish family claims, and at once began to assign the patronage on what were then deemed public grounds. Government appointments were still bartered largely and avowedly for political influence. But favouritism, family interests, personal caprice, ceased to be the only doors of entrance to the public service; applications were considered on their merits; courageous individuals even made bold to take the

unprecedented step of writing to Mr. Peel for employment or promotion without getting their suit supported by a patron.

To the mass of applications Mr. Peel's replies are simply brief refusals in the Lord Lieutenant's name. To requests from persons of consequence his answers, if not favourable, are friendly. But if even a county magnate put his claims too high, Mr. Peel let him know it.

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

‘Mr. H. came to me the other day, to use his own expression, to receive a final assurance of what was intended to be done for his son. My answer was that I could give him no specific assurance whatever, but, for a proof of the favourable disposition of the Irish Government towards himself and his family, must refer him to the offer which I had been authorised to make to him of the Secretaryship to the House of Industry, which very situation had been subsequently accepted by the brother of a county member. With this he professed himself much dissatisfied, said he thought he had been scandalously treated, and hinted at the tremendous consequences which must ensue, if he should make it known that the Prime Minister had written him a letter promising to recommend an application of his for a seat for his son at one of the Revenue Boards to the consideration of the Irish Government, and that they, after he had procured a seat in Parliament, refused to promise the appointment to his son when a vacancy should occur. As there is no use in arguing with a man who calls this a positive promise of Lord Liverpool's, I told him he was perfectly at liberty to make the whole transaction as public as he pleased, and I am only afraid that he will not avail himself of the permission he has received. The rage he was in was quite ridiculous; he threatens to bring in the bitterest enemy we have for —, doubts whether the Union is of any advantage to Ireland if the assurances of the Prime Minister are to be thus disregarded, and is quite sure there ought to be an independent Government in that country. I think the argument that the

Union must be dissolved because H.'s son is not appointed to the Board of Excise is only equalled by the exclamation of Major Sturgeon: "The world's at an end, my Quartermaster is dead."

With equal spirit the new Chief Secretary resented attempts to use political influence in screening a delinquent.

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. B. Littlehales.*

'I do not understand what General Mitchell means by asking for an authority to assure Lord A. that nothing is meant personally hostile to him. There is nothing personally hostile meant to the paymaster, who is evidently implicated; it is only for his public and official delinquency that we wish to punish him. Lord A. cannot presume to suppose that if the Lord Lieutenant had any ground for personal hostility against him as Lord A., an individual, he would take his revenge by inquiring into his conduct as a yeomanry officer. I do not think the style of General Mitchell's correspondence a very becoming one to a general officer. What has he to do with Lord A.'s "leading interest in the county," or with his "attachment to the party at present at the head of affairs"? If his interest or attachment were ten times as great, it ought not to be considered.'

How vigilant the young dispenser of favours was not to let one slip through his hands without value received, is seen in a letter from London to his Under Secretary.

'I perceive by the official minutes that a Mr. Mitchell has been appointed a supervisor of hearth money. Let me know who Mr. Mitchell is, and at whose recommendation he is appointed. It is probable that some friend in Parliament has received an obligation.'

Nor did Mr. Peel allow the private solicitations of a friend, however intimate, to override what he regarded as, on public principles, the just claims of another. To Mr. Hawthorne, Mr. Croker's victorious opponent at Down, he writes:

‘Your support in Parliament will entitle you to that attention which Government must always feel disposed to show their friends.’

Out of this grew no small embarrassment, for notwithstanding Peel’s timely warning to Croker, not to promise places and employments, and Croker’s assurance that he had given most positive directions against any such thing, he had incurred in Down ‘debts of gratitude,’ which as a matter of conscience for six years he never ceased imploring the Chief Secretary to help him to discharge.

A few of the letters may show how this vicious system of political patronage worked (making its entangled victims a torment to themselves and others), how Peel did his duty, and how he bore the infliction. His answers display infinite patience and good humour, with sincere desire, limited only by a sense of justice, to extricate and aid his friend, who, on principle, was entitled to urge some claims as a member of the Government, apart from his personal hold on Mr. Peel.

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

‘Nov. 13, 1812.

‘We are going to petition against Mr. Hawthorne, so that I must beg of you to grant him no favours till his seat is assured.’

‘*Jan.* 19, 1813.—I regret extremely the appointment of L. to the place in Down. L. was a great supporter of mine, but he was a dirty little jobber, and had sold, as I was informed, a place which he was to obtain through my influence. I, of course, having such suspicion, declined to recommend his friend. Then, anger, rage, and accusations of ingratitude against me; afterwards defection to the enemy, and open hostility. The place is one which, except for a triumph over my friends, Mr. L. would not have thought of accepting, and I understand that he professes to give away the salary to a poor relation.’

‘*April* 9.—Have I any chance of this place? I have no right to ask for it, but poor W., who resigned, may have some claim. He did so on the expectation that some friend of mine would have succeeded him, and would have died before he would have otherwise given up.

‘You hate receiving notes of this kind, don’t you? Yet, I assure you, not so much as I hate writing them.’

‘Aug. 3.—Is there a coast officer’s place at Annalong, in county Down, vacant? Can you give it to one of my martyrs? ’Tis but 35*l.* per annum. My martyr’s name you will find in my list.

‘Oh, my dear Peel, the horror of refusing a friend is nothing at all to the horror of asking a friend. I wish you had never gone to Ireland, or that I never had had a contested election. I leave you to guess which side of the alternative I should have been most pleased with.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

‘Dublin Castle: Aug. 7, 1813.

‘You are quite pathetic about the coast officer at Annalong. There is no vacancy there, but it does so happen that there was one at Rogerson’s Quay, which was filled up yesterday. The man who was appointed to it vacated a messenger’s place worth 60*l.*, to which Mr. J. M. shall forthwith be appointed.

‘Thus will J. M. (who, no doubt, is qualified to be a messenger, no part of whose duty, I fancy, is the conveyance of messages) get 60*l.* a year instead of 35*l.*

‘Oh, my dear Croker, it is very pleasant to receive an application from a friend with which you can without difficulty comply.’

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

‘Aug. 10.—When about to thank you for your kindness, your double kindness (*bis, quia cito*), about M., the inclosed letter came to oblige me to burden my thanks with a new application. I have told you the whole and hard story of Mr. F. You know that all I ask is a remove to Dublin. Pray, then, bear me in mind, and endeavour to make this move for me.

‘You laugh at my pathos about asking favours, but seriously I assure you (if not pathetically) that, hating it with any man, I abominate and detest it *vis-à-vis* of you.

‘I wish that all our lives we were only to have such intercourse as in those happier days when, whoever teased us separately, at least we had the consolation of not teasing one another, and when once a week at least we found a solace and diversion in coffee and Quintilian, buttered toast and General <sup>4</sup> Robinson.

‘Shall we ever know one another in that happier state? I dare say we should like one another even better than we do.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

‘Aug. 16, 1813.

‘I can only say that I have no application for an office of 200*l.* per annum in Dublin which it would give me personally more pleasure to comply with than yours in favour of Mr. F. But if you knew the thousands and ten thousands who for themselves, their relations, or their friends, peers, Parliament men, and aldermen, some with promises, some with claims, are at this moment hovering over every office of 200*l.* a year in which the remotest prospect of a vacancy can be discerned by the quickest eye—if you knew, as perhaps you do, that there are three such vacancies in a year—you would admit that difficulties exist. If I can overcome them I will. I can say no more.’

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

‘Dec. 18, 1814.

‘After the last Down election I gave you a list of some favours which I had promised to solicit. I am now so pressed with regard to these that I must beg of you to let me have answers to show. In two cases I am so pledged that I hope you may be able to do something.’

‘*Jan.* 26, 1815.—You are an extraordinary fellow, with all your great avocations, to recollect all my trifles, and to write me such full and pleasant answers. I thank you very much for your tide-surveyors’ places. They are a great relief to my conscience.’

<sup>4</sup> The Hon. Frederick Robinson, who had a turn for military questions.



*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

‘Oct. 28, 1815.

‘I rather flatter myself (as Robinson would say) that you will receive a letter from Lord Whitworth which will gratify you. There are few places in the port of Dublin worth 200*l.* per annum, and none vacant; but there is one vacant of 600*l.* a year in the Customs, which will, I have no doubt, suit Mr. F. equally well, and the satisfaction it will give Lord Whitworth and myself to appoint him to this office, instead of to the one which you selected for him, will be precisely as three to one.

‘I believe the appointment of your friend will be almost the only one in which I have had any personal gratification since I came into office.’

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

‘July 22, 1817.

‘I am obliged to remind you of an application I have been making to you these five years, to place Mr. McC. on the list of candidates for hearth-money collections. I am also pressed for a tide-waiter’s or any small place of that kind. These two, and M.’s business which I wrote to you about the other day, are the remains of my Down campaign, and are really debts of gratitude which I wish you would enable me to pay.’

‘Aug. 2.—I am delighted at M.’s success, and more obliged to Lord Whitworth and you than I can express.’

‘Feb. 8, 1818.—I want, really and anxiously, or I would not ask you, a tide-waiter’s place, or any other similar thing of 40*l.* or 50*l.* per annum, and I entreat you, if you can, to give it to me, and as soon as you can. You may be satisfied I should not write in this style if I were not seriously interested in this matter, which is really of consequence to me.’

When such were the requirements of one defeated candidate, who had promised not to draw heavily, it may be conceived what claims came in through sitting members. In general these

might cause less trouble, their rights (if supporters of the Government) to certain minor patronage being by usage well defined. But when for duties of exceptional importance it was deemed necessary to select the most efficient officer, Mr. Peel found it no easy task first to beard the local potentates, and afterwards to allay their anger. For example :

*Mr. Peel to Lord Lovaine.*

‘The situation of Collector of Excise of Cork is of so much importance to the revenue, the district being the second in extent in Ireland, inferior only to Dublin, that we were under the absolute necessity of appointing one of the Surveyors-General of Excise, who had no other claims than those of merit, which are not usually thought much of here.’

*Mr. Peel to the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer.*

‘After a hard and well-contested battle with Longfield we have, despite of his resistance and the recommendations of Lord Shannon, made Pennefeather Collector of Cork, somewhat to the surprise and satisfaction, I believe, of the Board of Excise.

‘In advising this appointment I may with truth assert that I was only actuated by a desire to place a most efficient man, whom I never saw, and who has not a shadow of what is usually meant in Ireland by the terms of “claim upon Government,” in a situation of so much importance.

‘I think if F——, the inspector of taxes who gave information that led to the inquiry into the hearth-money department, were promoted for his merits to be a Surveyor-General of Taxes in lieu of Pennefeather, we should have a place for the man recommended by Longfield, who is a pro-collector of Excise, which would not at all satisfy him, but might perhaps appease his wrath.

‘Thus we should have promoted two deserving officers in the Excise, at the expense of some indignation.’

The constant bartering of favours for political support forced on Mr. Peel as chief administrator of a system founded largely

on corruption, seems by reaction to have confirmed habits of delicacy where his private interests were concerned.

In one case only he proposes on his own account a 'job' for an Englishman in Ireland, but the job is of a very innocent nature. Two letters tell the whole story :

*Sir Robert Peel to Mr. Peel.*

'Do not forget Mr. B., who, expecting something better than being a banker's clerk, is, with his large family, out of employment.'

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

'Feb. 16, 1813.

'There is a man, whom I have long known, of very respectable character and family connections, who has just lost a situation which he had long filled with credit to himself, and which had enabled him to support a family of eleven or twelve children.

'He was, I believe, chief clerk in a bank, and lost the situation by the dissolution of the concern. If there should be any situation of about 300*l.* a year, either in the revenue or any other department (for he could, I fancy, find sufficient security), I should be happy to have him appointed, and I know that he would be a very useful servant of the public. I do not press this job of mine very earnestly in point of time.'

In resolving never to use his command of Government patronage in Ireland for his own behoof, Mr. Peel at this time stood almost alone. As a rule, ample provision for a man's family and friends was regarded as a perquisite of office. The Lord Lieutenant, who warmly approved Mr. Peel's endeavour to introduce in this respect a higher standard, was on his guard against rapacity. Before Mr. Peel's first arrival in Ireland he had written to him : 'If — is appointed to the situation [of Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer], his applications for offices for his friends will be without end, and you and I shall have much trouble with him.'

Fourteen years later Mr. Peel, as Home Secretary, supporting

Mr. Goulburn in a courageous remonstrance against the greed of an Irish law officer, thus summarises his own experience in the past :

‘ Whitehall : Jan. 6, 1826.

‘ I approve of every word which you wrote to ——. I found in Ireland that every official man, not content with the favour of Government to himself, thought he had a right to quarter his family on the patronage of Government.

‘ I took the course that you have done, in order to enable me to resist with effect such extravagant pretensions. I determined never to gratify any private wish of my own by the smallest Irish appointment.

‘ There is nothing half so disgusting as the personal monopoly of honours and offices by those to whom the distribution of them is entrusted.’

During and immediately after the elections, letters were exchanged between Mr. Peel in Ireland and his friends in England on the complexion of the new Parliament and the prospects of parties.

*Mr. Goulburn to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Downing Street : Sept. 16, 1812.

‘ My dear Peel,—I arrived in town yesterday, and immediately placed myself in your chair at the [Colonial] office. One principal object of my writing is to thank you for the detail of my future occupation which you were so good as to give me previous to setting off for Ireland. ‘ We miss you cruelly in London.’

‘ Oct. 15.—The elections here go on favourably enough. The worst is that Sir L. Holmes has given his seats to Lord Wellesley, and Buller has sold him his, the former on the promise of a peerage, the latter for reasons not known.

‘ Yours most affectionately,  
‘ HENRY GOULBURN.’

*The Hon. F. Robinson*<sup>5</sup> to Mr. Peel.

'Newby Hall: Oct. 18, 1812.

'My dear Peel,—For many weeks have I taken the virtuous resolution of devoting my pen to your service, and as frequently have I abandoned so laudable an intention.

'At one time I wished to congratulate you upon your *début* in the driving line, which Apsley assured us was of the best description, and at another I wished to condole with you upon the pleasures of managing an Irish general election. If you hate an election only half as much as I do, I do not envy you your share of happiness.

'I am in the mean time extremely doubtful whether we shall gain much by the dissolution, and I know various persons of the Frondeur tribe who disapprove of the measure. The only very agreeable circumstance which as yet it has produced is the prospect of both Brougham and Creevy being beat at Liverpool. The mortification of those two fellows would compensate for a world of trouble and disappointment in other respects.

'I have been ruined in postage during the dissolution, because numbers of corresponding friends have been absurd enough to congratulate me upon being Treasurer of the Navy, the denial of which has given me more trouble than the duties of fifty such offices; and, moreover, there is nothing so unpleasant as explaining to a congratulating acquaintance that his good wishes are premature.

'I plunged, however, into all the mysteries of trade before my holidays began, and saw enough of them to think that nothing can be worse than the restrictive system which Buonaparte compels us to adopt, and which obliges us to make as much fuss about importing twenty pounds of truffles as if it were an army.

'Talking of armies, I think the Russians will get Buonaparte into a tremendous scrape, if they will but fight it out.

<sup>5</sup> Afterwards, as Lord Goderich, Prime Minister.

I hold this opinion in spite of the prognostics of Croker, who goes about saying they will get licked, for no other reason but because everybody else hopes for another result.

'*Entre nous*, I think Croker a very decided enemy to the Government, and I know but one motive that prevents him from openly endeavouring to trip up our heels. I mention this to you, because you may as well be on your guard in your communications with him.

'It gives me great concern to think unfavourably of one for whom personally I would willingly entertain a very different opinion; but I am persuaded he is more mixed up in a Canning and Wellesley intrigue than we are aware of, and I am sensible that he has ingenuity enough to turn his own version of facts to whichever cause he may espouse.

'It appears to me from many circumstances that he has a personal dislike to most of the members of the present Government, and I suspect it arises from some want of little attentions on their part to him. Whatever be the cause, it unfortunately makes me much more reserved than I used to be in his society, and I avoid all subjects connected with the Government and its proceedings as much as possible.

'Very affectionately yours,  
'F. ROBINSON.'

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'Oct. 26, 1812.

'Strange to say, the object which some folks stated as the chief one in the dissolution, viz. the taking the Government boroughs out of Canning's hands, has totally failed in spirit though not in the letter, for he and Lord Wellesley will not have fewer than forty votes in our House. I shall never cease to regret our folly in the conduct of that last negotiation. I say our, though it was neither yours nor mine, but you will understand what I mean.

'Be assured we shall every day have more cause to lament it. "Keep down Canning," keep down fire, restrain steam.'

How much Mr. Peel had been set upon his guard, and how determined he was to keep out of any intrigue against Lord Liverpool, appears from his answer.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

‘ Oct. 30, 1812.

‘ I am much surprised at the accession of strength which from your letter Canning and Lord Wellesley seem to have gained. I am not, however, much alarmed by it, as I trust and believe that the House of Commons, after what has passed, will support Lord Liverpool against either or both combined. There never was a time when I felt more determined to do all I could to support the Government on its present footing, and on the principles on which it will meet Parliament.

‘ If I understood, as I believe I did, the offers made to Canning, I think they were fair ones, as he himself must have thought when he accepted them. And as to keeping him down, the Government knew his power too well not to work to have it exerted in their favour.’

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Nov. 2.—I have filled all our friends with joy by prophesying that we should not lose on the Irish elections. If indeed we should gain, you will be in great reputation as a practical statesman.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Castlereagh.*

‘ Dublin Castle: Nov. 14, 1812.

‘ Although our gain in Ireland may not have been very great, I think, considering the exertions which have been made by our opponents, the incredible activity of the Duke of Devonshire and the Catholics, we have done as much as could be expected in maintaining our ground.’

*Mr. Goulburn to Mr. Peel.*

‘Colonial Office: Nov. 14, 1812.

‘You have gained much honour, and I only wish that Arbuthnot had done half as well in England. *Entre nous*, it has been most infamously mismanaged.’

Deeply interested in his work in Ireland, which was in arrear owing to the elections, the Chief Secretary put off as long as possible his necessary appearance at Westminster, for the short sitting before Christmas. When he arrives there, a few sentences in his letters on business to the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Lord Lieutenant give his first impressions of the new House :

*Mr. Peel to Right Hon. W. V. Fitzgerald.*

‘Irish Office: Dec. 5, 1812.

‘It is difficult to say anything of domestic politics, as the campaign has not yet opened with any order. I think there is a considerable feeling in the House of Commons towards Canning, and that many of the Opposition are squaring their opinions in conformity with his.

‘There is evidently no concert between the leading members, and the loss of Tierney, whose speeches I think kept the opinions of the Opposition together, is severely felt. Ponsonby<sup>6</sup> declared that he never heard of Whitbread’s amendment till the Speaker read it from the chair. Creevy made a motion last night which Lord Milton, who sat next him, got up to reprobate, and which I believe Whitbread alone would have supported. Castlereagh made a very good speech indeed on the thanks to Lord Wellington.’

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

‘Irish Office: Dec. 15, 1812.

‘I think the Catholics have come deliberately to a resolution to try how far intimidation will succeed in the new

<sup>6</sup> The leader of the Opposition.



Parliament. If they do not find that answer, I dare say they will quietly relapse into supplication, and perhaps some of them will affect repentance.'

With such anticipations, and without taking any holiday, Peel returned to his Irish post. On December 30, he writes to Goulburn :

'I arrived in Dublin on Monday last, after a tedious passage of twenty-six hours. If the report of the loss of another frigate captured by the Yankees be true, I hope the Admiralty will be impeached.'

## CHAPTER III.

1812-1813.

The Catholic Question—Position of Canning and Lord Wellesley—Lord Liverpool and his Cabinet—Peel and his Colleagues in Ireland—Conversion of his Predecessor—Grattan's Committee and Bill—Protestant Fears and Hopes—Education of the Irish People.

THE political problem in Ireland most urgently requiring the insight and foresight of a statesman was that familiarly known as 'the Catholic question,' a legacy from the days of Elizabeth, of Cromwell, of William, and of Anne.

Before the Union with Great Britain, the question had been this: given a people three-fourths Catholic, but with a Protestant Parliament, a Protestant Executive Government, Protestant judges, and a Protestant Established Church, the landowners also, and the upper classes generally being chiefly Protestants—to such a people so governed how far can civil equality be granted without subverting the whole Constitution?

To this question the eighteenth century had given a partial answer. Europe generally had become more tolerant. In Ireland, of the savage Penal Code against Catholics but little now remained. Its most severe enactments had been repealed, or had fallen into disuse. A long series of Relief Acts had been passed by Protestant Irish Parliaments in 1774, in 1778, in 1782, in 1792, and in 1793. The last of these had restored to Catholics the electoral franchise, parliamentary and municipal. In theory it had admitted them to other common rights of citizenship, to carry arms, to take degrees, to endow a school or college, to serve on grand juries, to act as magistrates, to hold civil and military offices of trust. But in practice, even from minor posts, such as magistracies and commissions in the army or navy, Catholics were mostly excluded, and from undertaking the higher administrative or judicial functions, or sitting as legislators in either House of Parliament, they were still disqualified by law.

While the Union was pending, many Catholics had been

induced to support that measure by hopes held out to them that the United Parliament, with an overwhelming Protestant majority from England and Scotland, would be able and willing to make concessions more liberal than could be safely granted so long as there should be a separate Parliament for Ireland, returned by a great majority of Catholic electors.

Since the Union, twelve years had passed leaving these expectations unfulfilled. George III., who from the first had warned his ministers that to such a measure he never would consent, had remained inflexible in that determination. Pitt, though he denied that he had given any distinct pledge to the Irish Catholics, yet, refusing to be responsible for the absolute frustration of their hopes, had resigned in 1801. But four years later, being again in office, when Fox moved in favour of the Catholics, Pitt, rather than distress the King (who reproached him with having caused his mental malady by pressure on this question), had withstood the resolution as ill timed, and had defeated it by nearly three to one. After Pitt's death, Fox had failed to settle the question. The Duke of Portland's ministry had left it open. Mr. Perceval had strongly opposed concession. Lord Grenville and Lord Grey, on the contrary, had gone so far as to demand a total change in the system of government in Ireland, and the immediate repeal of civil disabilities on account of religious opinions. And now Lord Liverpool again had kept the question open, not only in his Cabinet, but to some extent in his own mind, which led, it will be seen, to frequent rumours of his conversion. Extracts from the letters<sup>1</sup> exchanged while he was first endeavouring to form a Government on a comprehensive basis will show the positions taken up on the one hand by the new 'third party' of Tories who favoured the Catholic claims, on the other by Lord Liverpool and by Mr. Peel.

*Mr. Canning to Lord Liverpool.*

'May 18, 1812.

'To become a part of your Administration with the previous knowledge of your unaltered opinions as to the policy of resisting all consideration of the state of the laws affecting her Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects would be to lend myself to the defeating of my own declared opinions on that most important question—opinions which are as far as those of any man from being favourable to precipitate and

<sup>1</sup> From Lord Liverpool's manuscript papers.

unqualified concession, but which rest on the conviction that it is the duty of the advisers of the Crown, with a view to the peace, tranquillity, and strength of the Empire, to take that whole question into their early and serious consideration, and earnestly to endeavour to bring it to a final and satisfactory settlement.'

*Lord Liverpool to Lord Wellesley.*

'Fife House : May 19, 1812.

'Upon the last occasion on which the subject [of Catholic disabilities] was discussed in Parliament, I expressly stated that circumstances might arise in which in my judgment some alteration in those laws would be advisable.

'I have always been desirous of hearing the specific proposition which should explain distinctly what part of the existing securities it was intended to repeal, what part it was intended to preserve, and what were the new securities which it has been so often declared must be substituted in the place of some of those which are at present in force.

'I will fairly own that in the present state of the opinions and feelings of the Roman Catholics, I do not believe such a project to be practicable, consistently with the attainment of the avowed objects of really satisfying the Roman Catholics and of affording an adequate security to the Established Church and Constitution.

'Entertaining this opinion, I have felt it to be my duty to continue to resist a parliamentary inquiry on that subject, which in my judgment would be productive of no other effect than that of alarming the Protestants on the one hand, and of deluding and deceiving the Roman Catholics on the other.

'Besides the considerations to which I have referred, the circumstances of Europe at this time give rise to objections.

'I have thought this explanation due to my colleagues and myself. In one point we are all agreed, that this is not the moment at which the question ought to be entertained with a view to immediate practical consequence.'

*Lord Wellesley to Lord Liverpool.*

' Apsley House : May 21, 1812.

' I now understand your opinion to be, that circumstances may arise in which, in your judgment, some alteration would be advisable in the laws affecting the Roman Catholics.

' I should be desirous of urging the same inquiry respecting *circumstances* which you have made respecting *securities*, and I should be anxious to hear the specific statement of all or any of those circumstances, under which you would advise any alteration in the laws respecting the Roman Catholics.

' The explanation which you require respecting securities is attainable only by a full consideration and discussion of the whole subject; and I therefore view the declared intention of resisting the first step towards such a discussion as an effectual barrier against that explanation, which you consider to be the necessary preliminary to any alteration in the existing statutes.

' The details of your reasoning on this part of the question render the prospect of any settlement utterly hopeless. You require a change in the state of the opinions, feelings, conduct and temper of the Roman Catholics, as a preliminary even to the consideration of the causes of their complaints. But is it possible to expect effectual change in the temper of the Roman Catholic body, while you refuse even to inquire into the nature of their grievances?

' The repeated rejection of their claim, without any other deliberation than that which has arisen on the mere question of taking the petition into consideration, is not a course of proceeding calculated to mitigate the severity of disappointment. Reason and moderation must appear in our consideration of their prayer, if we hope to infuse those qualities into their proceedings.

' You require also a change in the circumstances of Europe. Until these preliminaries shall have been established, you declare that it will be your duty to resist parliamentary inquiry, which in your judgment could be

productive of no other effect than to alarm the Protestants and to delude the Roman Catholics.

‘I apprehend much more danger, both of alarm and of delusion, from any system of measures to be founded on the general and indistinct terms in which you state that “circumstances may arise in which some alteration in the laws would be advisable.”

‘You refer to considerations of a “very high importance,” which until a very late period of time have precluded the Executive Government and Parliament from entertaining this measure; and you suggest that in the opinion of some persons these considerations have not lost their weight. I presume that you refer to the known sentiments of the most exalted and venerable authority in these realms on the claims of his Majesty’s Roman Catholic subjects.

‘With the warmest sentiments of personal veneration, attachment, and gratitude, my opinion has always been that the duty of loyalty and affection towards a British Sovereign does not consist in submissive obedience even to the honest prejudices or errors of the Royal mind, but rather in respectful endeavours to remove those prejudices and errors, by free advice in council, and by temperate remonstrance in Parliament.

‘This is a subject of the utmost, of the most perilous delicacy. Your letter has opened it, I will pursue it no further than to assure you that when, on January 31, I declared in the House of Lords my sentiments respecting the Roman Catholic claims, the necessity which had occasioned my silence appeared to me to have entirely ceased.’

That is to say, Lord Wellesley did not regard the new antagonism of the Prince Regent, who until the death of Fox had viewed the Catholic cause with favour, as an obstacle of the same order as the invincible repugnance and frail health of the old King, now laid aside.

Such were the intentions of the Whigs, and of Canning and Wellesley. Within the Cabinet, the Foreign Secretary (Castlereagh), the First Lord of the Admiralty (Melville), and the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Vansittart), were friendly to the Catholic claims. Among Peel’s personal friends Robinson and

Arbuthnot took that side, and so did those who best knew Ireland, Palmerston, Desart, and Croker. Of the Irish Government, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Fitzgerald) voted for the Catholics, and the Solicitor-General (Bushe)<sup>2</sup> 'had fought their battles.' The Lord Lieutenant, the Lord Chancellor (Manners), the Attorney-General (Saurin, of Huguenot family), and the new Under Secretary (Gregory), on the contrary, held decided 'Protestant' opinions, for which they were not slow to enlist the zeal of their young colleague.

*The Duke of Richmond to Mr. Peel.*

'Aug. 9, 1812.

'As I never happened to be in my place when the Catholic question came on, I have not spoken of my sentiments on the Emancipation, excepting latterly to Mr. Perceval. To people in this country I have said that I would oppose anything in favour of the Catholics so long as they held the language they have taken up. But I have not expressed myself further, and the Cabinet seem to think I had better not.

'I own I differ about it, and though I think it was right I should be silent on it for a considerable time, I believe it would now be better the Protestants should know on whom they may depend. No stone is left unturned to add strength to the Catholics, violent as they are, and cold water is universally thrown on the Protestants' even giving their own opinions.

'Hitherto, however, I have followed the wish of the Cabinet and have been silent. I must own I am nearly tired of this silence, and that I think it hardly fair to the most loyal people of this country.'

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

'Aug. 1812.

'I am going to Coombe Wood, Lord Liverpool's, tomorrow, and I shall then have an opportunity of communicating with him fully.

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards Chief Justice. Both he and Saurin had been able and incorruptible opponents of the Union.

‘I feel very anxious to be put in possession of the view which H.M.’s Government takes of the pledge which has been given by the House of Commons,<sup>3</sup> that it will take the Catholic question into consideration in the ensuing session. If there is a dissolution, as I fancy there will be, that pledge may not be actually binding upon their successors, but there can be little doubt that it will be acted upon by them.

‘The question will be found, I should think, a very embarrassing one to Government, and indeed to many others probably. Some may affect to consider the pledges which have been given applicable to the consideration only of the question, and that they are not bound to anything more than to a fair discussion and impartial hearing of all that can be said on both sides.

‘I cannot conceive what new light is expected to be thrown upon this question, or what satisfaction Catholics can be supposed to derive from a new discussion of it, unless it is to lead infallibly to something in their favour. I do not exactly understand how many persons, after having voted decidedly with Mr. Perceval not merely against concession but against consideration, and after having declared that the temper and tone of the Catholics on recent occasions precluded any concessions, could reconcile it to themselves to give the vote which they did so soon after his death. It proved that they had voted against their own opinions, in compliance with the opinion of one whose authority over them might have survived him at least a few weeks, as they acknowledged it to have been so great during his lifetime.’

*The Attorney-General (Saurin) to Mr. Peel.*

‘Sept. 30, 1812.

‘I believe you are with me in opinion that an effectual resistance to the Catholic claims is not only essential to the stability of the present Administration, but, what is of far

<sup>3</sup> In June 1812, on Canning’s motion, by a majority of 235 to 126.



greater importance, to the safety of our establishments, and to the connection of Great Britain and Ireland.'

Having to encounter in debate such practised orators on the Catholic side as Canning and Plunket, the young Chief Secretary hoped to be supported in the House of Commons (as is now usual) by one or other of the Irish law officers; but Saurin being unwilling to leave Ireland, and Bushe being inclined to favour the Catholic claims, Mr. Peel was left to carry on the contest single-handed.

*The Duke of Richmond to Mr. Peel.*

'Oct. 13, 1812.

'I will write to the Attorney-General to-day, but I doubt his undertaking Parliament. The Solicitor is against the Catholics, on account of their violence, but certainly thinks their clergy should be paid, and some indulgences granted. I should be glad if they would accept of payment of their clergy, as that would place them in the hands of Government, but I am not for other indulgence.

'Bushe has fought their battles when they were quiet, and would not be a proper person, I fear, to answer Plunket.'

In February 1813 Mr. Grattan gave notice of his motion for a Committee of the whole House on the Roman Catholic claims. In February of the previous year the former House of Commons had rejected a somewhat similar proposal. Against that motion Mr. Peel had spoken, but with an express reservation that 'he would by no means pledge himself with regard to the Catholic question.' Against Mr. Canning's motion in June he had given a silent vote. As Chief Secretary for Ireland, he now publicly assumed the more decided attitude which he maintained for the next sixteen years unchanged. He at once writes to rally the Irish supporters of the Government, and sends to Ireland daily accounts of the debate.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'Irish Office: Feb. 16, 1813.

'Pray use every exertion to get the Irish members over. They treat us very ill, and, receiving ten times as many

favours as the English members, do not give us one-tenth of their support. I believe Colonel O'Neil has scarcely given a vote since his appointment. How can Mr. Odell expect to retain his seat at the Treasury, if he absents himself? The Catholic question will certainly come on on the 25th, and the call will in all probability be enforced previous to it. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was brought in custody last year from Ireland.'<sup>4</sup>

*Mr. Peel to the Attorney-General.*

'Feb. 18, 1813.

'Castlereagh will, I fear, vote with Grattan, but I should not be much surprised if he were the only Cabinet Minister in the House of Commons who did, as I am not without hope that Vansittart will retrace his steps.

'Canning himself is, I hear, much embarrassed, but he is, I fear, too much involved to have any hope that he can extricate himself. Many are very sanguine, and hope that, as there has been a great infusion of Protestantism into the new Parliament, we shall succeed in the first instance.

'It would be a good argument in favour of making a final stand, and declaring decisively that we would concede no further, if we could show that past concessions had only served to place the Catholics on the footing on which they stood immediately after the Revolution, and only to relax the penal laws, which had nothing to do with the fundamental laws which were then established. For instance, that the elective franchise was enjoyed by the Catholics till the year 1727, and that we might therefore readmit them to the exercise of that privilege, and still refuse to them the extension of others, from which they were excluded at or prior to the Revolution. It would be material to know precisely how far we should be justified in assuming that we had just retraced every step as far back as the year 1688 (or 1692, I believe, as far as Ireland is concerned), and that we could not advance now without an infringement of

<sup>4</sup> Literally true. See the House of Commons Journals.

that which must be considered as the fundamental law of the Constitution.'

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

'Feb. 25, 1813.

'Mr. Bankes, who voted with Canning last year, will lead the opposition to Canning this night. It is contrary to all general principles to employ as a leader a deserter from the enemy's camp, but it is justifiable in this case, I think, as well as politic, and it will greatly encourage all relapsed and relapsing Protestants to find the first objection to Grattan's motion taken by a person who voted with him last year.'

'Feb. 27.—I am not so sanguine as I was as to the result of this discussion; indeed, I fear there seems a greater impression in favour of the Committee than against it.

'Plunket made a very able speech, and, I am afraid, a very effective one. Grattan quite the reverse. The debate has not been at all violent, nor is the feeling on either side so strong as I expected, much less so indeed on the Protestant side.'

The Lord Lieutenant, an old Guardsman, even at this early stage, it appears, began to anticipate armed collision.

*The Duke of Richmond to Mr. Peel.*

'March 3, 1813.

'I am sorry to find there is a doubt about the Catholic question. If it goes to a Committee, they will have sense enough to throw out anything of material consequence to the body, and in that case we shall probably have a little fighting, but that is not of much consequence. We shall lose a few valuable lives, and hang a good many that richly deserve it.'

On the fourth and last night of the debate Mr. Peel was surprised to find among the advocates of concession his immediate predecessor in office, the brother of Lord Wellesley.

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

‘ March 2, 1813.

‘ Pole made, in my opinion, a most extraordinary speech last night—a speech which, if I have any just idea of the opinions which he had, and which he avowed, when he was in office, I would not have delivered till I was perfectly indifferent to any charge of inconsistency which could be found against me.

‘ What must Saurin and the Chancellor think of his confession, that he was acting when in office against his opinion, and was writing to [the Home Secretary] Ryder, in favour of the Catholic claims, documents which Ryder did not remember to have received ?

‘ I will send immediately the result of the discussion to your Grace. We have made a bad fight of it, and have not had a single speech against the Committee worth hearing.

‘ I see one of the papers reports me as having said that I was not an advocate for perpetual exclusion. It might be inferred that I objected only to the time of discussing the question. That is not the case. My opinion is—and I expressed it, I hope, without any reserve—that there are certain anomalies in the system which I would wish to remove, but the main principles of it I would retain untouched; and that at no time and under no circumstances, so long as the Catholic admits the supremacy in spirituals of a foreign earthly potentate, and will not tell us what supremacy in spirituals means—so long as he will not give us voluntarily that security which every despotic sovereign in Europe has by the concession of the Pope himself—will I consent to admit them. They are excluded from privileges for which they will not pay the price that all other subjects pay, and that all other Catholics in Europe feel themselves bound to pay.

‘ My only object was to take a decided line, and not to appear to be laying out the ground in such a way that I might have an opportunity of imitating the conduct of my predecessor when, like him, I shall retire from office.’

The division gave a majority of forty in favour of Grattan's proposal. Mr. Peel continues his comments.

'*March 5.*—We go into a Committee on the Catholic claims on Tuesday next. I am convinced that entering into it at the present time and with the feelings of jealousy which are now entertained by the Protestants is infinitely more unfavourable to the Catholics than if Grattan's proposition had been rejected.

'We shall probably grant them something which will not satisfy them, but those who voted for them this year will argue next year that the question underwent full discussion, that the Parliament granted all they thought it safe to grant, and they will not consent to the agitation of a question on which so recent a decision had been made.

'I think Mr. Canning will find that his object in procuring a final and satisfactory adjustment will totally fail.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'*March 5, 1813.*

'What do the Chancellor and the Attorney-General think of Pole's confession of his opinions? He has made no very favourable impression of his consistency or of his fairness. I'll be better prepared for him the next time.'

Notwithstanding this modest remark, Mr. Peel had made a telling hit in reply to Mr. Pole. 'The right hon. gentleman,' he said, 'is surprised that those who have succeeded him in office, and whom he is pleased to call his halves,<sup>5</sup> should differ so much from each other on this subject. But, greatly as my right hon. friend [Mr. Fitzgerald] and I may differ upon it, we are not more at variance with each other than the right hon. gentleman is with himself. . . . In personal unity we cannot represent him, in discordance of sentiment we are competent to the task.'

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

'*March 8.*—I cannot say how much I regret I did not notice that part of Mr. Pole's speech in which he insinuated

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Pole had been Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer as well as Chief Secretary.

that the opinion of the law officers on the Catholic question would affect the advice they gave to the Government when consulted with regard to the suppression of disturbances.

‘It was a great but a most unintentional omission on my part, but really I was so wholly unprepared to expect the attack which Pole made that I did what I believe many of those do who are so young in debate as I am—totally forgot while I was speaking that which before I rose and after I sat down occurred to me as the most material thing that I had to say.’

*The Duke of Richmond to Mr. Peel.*

‘March 5, 1813.

‘I have read with great surprise Pole’s speech. Till he spoke on Canning’s motion I really conceived him to be almost as violent against the Catholic claims as Sir R. Musgrave, &c. Your answer to him seems to have been particularly good. In the papers I have read I do not see the part you mention, that Pole said he wrote to Ryder stating his favourable opinions of the claims.

‘He must have dreamed this, for, knowing it to be my opinion that nothing ought to be done in favour of them while they kept the tone they did, he never could, in the confidential situation he was placed here, have counteracted those wishes by private letters to the Secretary of State. He might have differed in opinion with me, but he could not have acted so underhand a part as to correspond privately with the Government against me.

‘Soon after the division was known yesterday, people were employed in the streets to declare bread would be sold for almost nothing now the Catholics had triumphed.

‘The Committee does not, however, in society make half the fuss Pole’s speech does. The clamour against him is universal. One man remembers his saying he would rather cut off his right arm than grant anything to the Catholics. The Chancellor, Chief Justice Norbury, Serjeant Moore, the Attorney, the Solicitor, and all the upper people.

belonging to the law, are indignant at his attack on the Attorney, and still more so at that on the Solicitor.

‘Lord Lorton wrote yesterday to his agent to make all the freeholders he can on his small Queen’s County property. He says he is sorry he can’t make more than twenty, but that those shall go against Pole.

‘Pray put ministers on their guard against reducing our force, especially cavalry, at present. Perhaps things may go quietly, but we ought to be prepared for the worst. Please God, if we are obliged to draw the sword, the Committee gentlemen shall have their full share of it, if I can catch them.’

‘*March 13.*—I am extremely sorry to see the turn the Catholic question seems to take. Even the Speaker, whom I thought very steady with us, is for granting a great deal too much. I was surprised to see Arbuthnot’s name in the division for the Committee. He voted with Canning last year, but he told me he was ashamed of having so done. What can he say for himself now?’

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

‘*March 10, 1813.*

‘I am sorry to inform your Grace that we did even worse in the Committee last night than we did in the House.

‘Mr. Grattan moved that it is advisable to repeal the laws imposing civil and military disabilities on the Catholics, with such regulations and exceptions as might provide for the stability of the Church Establishments, &c.

‘I confess I think the principle of this resolution a more objectionable one than that to which we came the other night. We then consented to consider the laws with a view to satisfactory adjustment, we now admit that those laws should be repealed, with certain exceptions indeed, but the principle on which we are to legislate is that all restrictions are bad, and the onus of proving any individual restriction to be a necessary one is thrown upon us.

‘ We were beaten on the division by a majority of sixty-seven. Some persons on our side (a very few, however) left the House, being of opinion that our opposition to Grattan’s resolution in the Committee was a vexatious one. One of them surprised me, Lord Compton, Mr. Perceval’s near relation and successor for Northampton. He might, I think, have overcome such scruples.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘ We were terribly beaten, but we are sad cowards, I am afraid; at least we are shamefully used. Poor Duigenan could not get a hearing, and the general impression seemed against the Protestants. We will fight them out, however, to the last. I am sure it is better than to give way.

‘ I am more vexed that I did not notice what Pole said about Bushe, than that I passed by his allusion to the “man after my own heart,” as he called Saurin. He paid me a compliment by calling him so, which, indeed, is not in point of fact an unmerited one. But differing as I do with Bushe upon the question, it was most unfortunate that I did not refer Pole to those victorious exertions which Bushe made, and which Pole should not have forgotten, in support of the prosecutions against the Catholic Convention.

‘ After what has passed on the Catholic question, I do not think that the Duke would wish to remain. I shall feel no great inclination to acknowledge another master. God knows who will be found to succeed him.’

*The Irish Attorney-General (Saurin) to Mr. Peel.*

‘ March 16, 1813.

‘ Your defence of the Protestant cause was not only by far the ablest and best, but the only one which did not seem to strengthen the cause of the adversary by some concession of principle. I really fear the Protestant cause is lost in the Commons. There can be no rally now, but on the securities.



‘ If on that subject the common sense of the House could be awakened, surely they must see that in Ireland the wit of man cannot devise any security for a Protestant Establishment but a Protestant Government. Nor could the wit of man furnish an argument by which the existence of an exclusive Protestant Church Establishment could be defended in a country in which the population was more than two to one Catholic, if the Government of that country was Catholic also, or as much Catholic as Protestant. On what principle could it be maintained that the great patronage and the great dignities and possessions of that Establishment should belong exclusively to the Protestants ?

‘ We ought not to deceive ourselves. Ireland must be either a Catholic or a Protestant State—let us choose. But he is a Utopian who believes he has discovered a nostrum by which it can be both, or neither. This is the project of Grattan and Plunket, who have taken it up as a mere party question, and have with great talent and ingenuity first deceived themselves (at which no two men are more expert), and next, I am sorry to say, they have misled many others.

‘ I think much might be made of our Act of 1793, in which the Irish Parliament (to whom some credit should be given on the subject) seems to have drawn a line as favourable as possible to the Catholics, consistently with the preservation of a Protestant Establishment. The subject was well considered and liberally executed, Parliament having actually gone beyond what the Catholics, or their advocates at that day, demanded, in order, as they conceived, to make the work complete, and to act on a principle.

‘ The principle was finally to repeal all the popery laws properly so called, viz. the Acts made against papists as such after the Revolution ; to relax, as far as principle and safety would allow, the fundamental and constitutional law, which had existed from the 2nd of Elizabeth, by which Catholics were excluded from every office in the State

through and by which the executive government of the State (in its most extensive sense) is exercised; and to admit them into offices under the Crown, but with an exception of such as necessarily have political influence attached to them, and may be fairly considered as exercising or executing part of the government of the State.

‘It was at the time considered as a settlement. It would have been so, I believe, but that the Society of United Irishmen, for purposes afterwards avowed, took up the case of the Catholics again, and claimed as their right an Emancipation which by the Act of 1793 had been just disclaimed on their behalf. And then, unfortunately for the country, Mr. Grattan, Ponsonby, and Plunket took it up, together with the cause of Parliamentary Reform, as an engine to turn out the Administration; and both parties playing the same game, but I admit with views totally different, we were involved in a rebellion which threatened our existence and produced a thousand horrors and calamities.

‘To that succeeded the Union,<sup>6</sup> and with the Union was imported into the Imperial Parliament the Catholic Emancipation now sought. It is really of Jacobin origin, and was started by T. Wolfe Tone, who founded the Catholic Committee, as it exists at this day, in that same year 1793, and of whose measures the great orators and statesmen, as they are called, are now the advocates.

‘If this can furnish you with a hint, I know how well you can improve it. But I rather fear that my views, like myself, are somewhat out of date.’

*The Duke of Richmond to Mr. Peel.*

‘March 19, 1813.

‘You are quite right in opposing the second reading of Grattan’s Bill [about to be brought in to give effect to the resolution]. I remember an expression of Wellington’s

<sup>6</sup> Saurin, as well as Bushe, had ably opposed the Union.

which puts the case in its true light. He said "it was nonsense to talk of the Church and State being in danger; English influence and connection were in danger if the Catholic Emancipation were ever carried." Nothing can be more true, and I am glad to say Wellington retains the opinion, though [his brother] Pole has changed.'

Before the second reading the Protestant party attempted to gain time by supporting a motion of Sir John Hippisley for a Select Committee, to inquire into the state and tenets of the Roman Catholics, and the laws by which they are affected. This move and its fate are thus reported.

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

'May 12, 1813.

'We failed in our object, and Grattan's Bill will be read a second time to-morrow. We divided—for the [Select] Committee, 187; against it, 235.

'If the motion had been carried, it would have had the effect of postponing Grattan's Bill till next session, and the country might in the interim have opened its eyes to the danger of the proposed innovation. Mr. Canning made an extremely amusing and witty speech, quizzed Hippisley, and attacked us for our inconsistency in voting for inquiry when at former periods we had resisted it. I think the line we took a perfectly consistent one. When the question was whether we should consider the claims of the Catholics and the laws affecting them, or should resist their claims, we voted for resistance without inquiry; the question now is whether we shall consider or concede, and we prefer inquiry to concession. Those who voted in this session "that this House will take into its most serious consideration the laws affecting the Catholics," and who now insist upon granting them nearly all they wish without any inquiry, are, in my opinion, much more open to the charge of inconsistency.'

'May 13.—We were again beaten on the second reading. We divided, 203 against 245, so that our numbers have

not decreased. I think it was impossible to allow the Bill to pass without a division through that stage wherein the principle undergoes discussion; but the best opportunity for making a stand will be after the Bill has gone through Committee.

‘We have been so often beaten, and, to say the truth, we make so poor a fight in argument, that I am not very sanguine in my hopes of ultimate success. Last night no one spoke on our side, except Duigenan, until Ryder and myself determined that, if neither Sir W. Scott nor others—who ought not to be lukewarm—would rise, we would, at least, deprive our antagonists of the opportunity of taunting us for having allowed the Bill to pass its second reading in silence.’

The new Parliament having thus four times in three months affirmed the principle that concessions should be made to Catholic claims, the opposing Protestants might well entertain but slender hopes of effectually prolonging the contest.

But now came a change in their favour. With the discussion of ‘securities’ their prospects began to improve. In the same letter Mr. Peel continues :

‘Lord Castlereagh stated his views of the securities that were necessary, and I hope that he will adhere to them, for I understood them to be—though they were not conveyed in very clear language—that the Crown should have a direct influence, in its nature somewhat resembling the Veto in the appointment of Catholic bishops, and that a provision should be made from the public funds for the maintenance of their clergy, similar to that which is granted annually to the seceding ministers in Ireland. It is not very probable that the Catholics will accede to these terms.’

The proposed securities were put into shape, and on Mr. Canning’s motion (in a Committee *pro forma*) were inserted in the Bill. The new clauses proposed ‘the appointment, by Parliament, of Protestant commissioners, with power to withhold their assent to the nomination of those bishops and apostolic vicars of whose loyalty they entertained any doubt; and also with power to in-

spect the papers and books connected with those nominations—with a proviso that they should be bound not to betray the secrets of the Catholic Church.' Mr. Grattan said, 'These clauses would amount to a complete security for domestic nomination. His right honourable friend had touched the subject with a delicate hand. Those appointed to frame the Bill had not introduced the clauses, not because they disapproved of them, but because they did not know how far the Catholic body might approve of their introduction. For his own part, he thought they were liberal in their nature, and they ought to be received.' Mr. Peel, on the contrary, anticipated Catholic objections.

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

'May 21, 1813.

'I forward to your Grace by express a copy of the amended Bill. It is now in a state which I should think would give no satisfaction to the Catholics, as it gives to the Crown a direct control over the nomination of the Catholic bishops. I perceive that the Chief Secretary is made President of the Catholic Cabinet, which his Majesty is in future to have, and in his absence the senior Privy Councillor; so that it is possible that Dr. Duigenan may preside. To this the Catholics may probably object, and, for my own part, I think it is an absurd regulation, calculated to make them suspicious and dissatisfied, and, as a security, not worth the paper on which it was printed.'

This forecast was speedily fulfilled. No sooner did the amended Bill reach Ireland than the Catholic bishops met in Synod, and unanimously condemned it. The Catholic Board were divided in opinion, but a large majority thanked the bishops for their action.

Meanwhile in Parliament those who were prepared for only moderate concessions had judged the securities, including Canning's, to be insufficient. The Speaker (Abbot), again—as on Curwen's Bill—taking influential action in Committee, opposed the first clause admitting Catholics to Parliament. The clause was rejected, in an unusually full House, by a small majority, 251 to 247. The Bill was dropped, the Catholic Board threw over Grattan, and Protestant hopes revived.

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

‘ May 26, 1813.

‘ You will no doubt be surprised by the exertions we have made to procure the defeat of the Catholic Bill—or, rather, by the success of them.

‘ Holmes was extremely active in managing our friends, and did it without any appearance of being employed by any part of the Government.

‘ I think the vote a most important one. In the debate it was admitted that a vote upon the clause was a vote upon the Bill. Our enemies used this as an argument before the decision—and we, of course, will not forget their admission—that, in the fullest House ever known on this question, we have beaten them on the principle of the Bill.

‘ I should not be surprised if the tide in favour of the Catholics had reached its height, and will begin to subside.

‘ Poor Grattan must be in a melancholy dilemma. I cannot pity him, for it is a just return for all the ferment which he has created in Ireland. By consenting to the securities which Canning proposed—in the hope that they would at least secure his Bill, he has forfeited the confidence of the Catholics, and has gained no credit with the Protestants.’

The Protestant section of the Ministry were jubilant over the ‘defeat of the Romans,’ and of Canning. But, as members of a Cabinet divided against itself, and under a chief who had kept the question open, they were under some restraint in giving vent to their satisfaction, even on convivial occasions.

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

‘ May 29, 1813.

‘ I cannot think how the report could have reached Dublin that Lord Liverpool had turned Catholic. I believe he is as good a Protestant as ever he was.

‘ At the dinner yesterday the Protestant feeling was most conspicuous, and I think it must rather have annoyed Castlo-

reagh and those who supported his view of the question. "The Protestant Ascendency" was put down among the printed toasts, but was not given—on account, I presume, of Castlereagh being present. There was in one of the songs a verse nearly to the following effect :

May all artful contrivers be left in the lurch !

with some allusion in the preceding line to the security of "King and Church." This was most tumultuously encored, and repeated three or four times, to the no small satisfaction of Duigenan and Gifford. The spirits of the Doctor have wonderfully improved within the last two or three days. I think a strong Protestant feeling is making very rapid advances in the country.'

Amid such rejoicing of their political opponents, Irish Catholics of all ranks, from peer to peasant, saw with bitter feelings the general 'Emancipation,' which had been held out to them as an inducement to the Union, and had been in principle conceded more than once by the late and by the present Parliament, snatched back from them by a small majority on the question of securities, and again indefinitely postponed.

This, however, was not the sole issue between Catholic and Protestant awaiting parliamentary action. One of the first questions which confronted Mr. Peel on his arrival in Ireland was the problem, How shall a Protestant Government promote the education of a Roman Catholic people ?

This important but difficult reform he took up with much promptness and with spontaneous zeal. At the earliest possible moment he had brought in a Bill creating a new Board for the Endowed Schools, and had begun to urge upon the Government a larger measure. Soon after the new year he writes to the Home Secretary on the subject. Two months later he consults Mr. Leslie Foster, an active member of the Commission on Education, and instructs the law officers to draw a general Bill.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Sidmouth.*

'Dublin : Jan. 22 (?), 1813.

'I conclude that your Lordship has received a copy of the Report of the Commissioners of Education in Ireland, and

I feel very anxious that the attention of his Majesty's Government should be called to the important subject to which it refers.

'The Report, as your Lordship is doubtless aware, recommends the appointment of Commissioners, who are to superintend the general education of the lower orders of all classes without distinction as to the religion which they profess. In fact, the system of education in Ireland must be a very limited one (and would probably utterly fail in its object) which should be introduced, or even suspected by the Catholics to be introduced, with any view, however remote, of converting their children to the Protestant faith. It is evidently, I think, the intention of the Commissioners to recommend that Catholics should be introduced into the new Commission, that they should have equal powers of selecting the books to be used, of deciding upon the situations of the schools, and in every respect should be placed on an equal footing with their fellow Protestant Commissioners, excepting so far as their control might be limited, by limiting their numbers in the Commission.

'There are many points upon which it would be necessary for the Irish Government to collect information; to inquire, for instance, how far the Catholics generally, and the bishops in particular, would be disposed to co-operate. But I think it would be better that we should first ascertain whether, assuming the execution of the plan to be practicable in Ireland, the principle upon which it is founded has the approbation of the Government, and whether they are disposed to sanction the institution of a system of general education in Ireland, of which institution the Protestant religion is not to form (necessarily at least) a part.

'I had some conversation with Lord Liverpool, and, I believe, with your Lordship, upon this point before I left England.'



*Mr. Peel to Mr. J. Leslie Foster.*

‘Irish Office: March 25, 1813.

‘The general outline of the measure which I should be disposed to recommend to Government is very much in conformity with that which the Commissioners of Education have suggested. I think we ought not to accompany any boon we may confer upon the Catholics, by a sacrifice of any part of the existing Protestant establishments, and that the superintendence of them ought to be confined to Protestant Commissioners.

‘Mr. Pole delivered his opinions last night, and, considering the time which he has devoted to the subject, I was very sorry to find that they were in many respects at variance with those that I entertain. He thinks that there ought to be two separate Boards, one for the regulation of the present establishments, and the other for the control of such as may be founded upon the suggestion of the Fourteenth Report; that the members of each ought to receive large salaries; so that the Government may have that control over them which he thinks they cannot exercise if their attendance and labour be gratuitous; and that to the latter Board the Catholics should be admitted.

‘In this last opinion I concur fully. Without the admission of Catholics to the Board, which is to superintend the education of all classes and all sects, we shall, I think, do nothing effectual.

‘The point on which I principally differ with Pole is in an opinion that he expressed that parochial schools, founded under the Act of Henry VIII., should supply to the poor in general that education which it is the object of the Fourteenth Report to provide for them. I should rather have expected such a suggestion from a firm Protestant than from such a determined advocate for the Catholics as Pole has recently become. The parochial schools are strictly establishments of the Church, supported by the revenues of the Church, and solely under the control of its members. As the law at present stands, the incumbent of

the benefice may, if he pleases, keep the school himself; nay, perhaps it is his duty to keep it rather than to provide a schoolmaster; and the Catholic would be little satisfied by being told that in every parish in Ireland he might send his children to be instructed by a clergyman of the Church of England, or by a parish clerk, or by other persons appointed or paid by the clergyman. I cannot conceive any proposal more likely to defeat the object in view, of providing education for all sects without reference to their religious tenets.

‘I mentioned this objection to Mr. Pole after the debate, and he said that it might be obviated by making the clergy contribute to the maintenance of the schools to be founded, but transferring to others the appointment of and control over the schoolmasters. This is in my mind, according to the phraseology of the day, far too liberal. I think in schools maintained at the expense of the Church, it is not unreasonable to educate the scholars in the religion of the State.’

Thus Mr. Peel’s policy differed from Mr. Pole’s in leaving the ‘parochial schools,’ where they existed, to the Established Church, and founding entirely new schools, for Catholics as well as Protestants, under a Board including Catholic members.

*Mr. Peel to the Attorney-General.*

‘London: April 1, 1813.

‘I think we should guard with care every institution that we have for the instruction of the Protestants, without any relaxation of the principles on which they are founded in favour of any sect whatever.

‘But I am equally impressed with the necessity of forming the new establishments, which may be founded for the general education of the poor, on as liberal a scale as possible.

‘I am quite satisfied that Catholics must be admitted to serve on the Commission, but I do not think there should be any clause in the Act determining the proportion

which they should bear to the Protestant Commissioners. We must attempt to find men in whom we can repose full confidence.

‘The preamble of the Act should, I think, advert to the benefit which must be derived in a national point of view from the education of the lower classes of society, to the expediency of establishing in Ireland a systematic and uniform plan for their instruction, and it might be added that, under the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, all interference in the religious tenets of any particular class should be excluded.’

*The Attorney-General to Mr. Peel.*

‘We have prepared a draft of a Bill for a Board of Education. We have no doubt that to render it effective the members should be appointed by the Government.

‘We have not defined, nor can it be necessary to define, in the Bill the mode of education to be adopted by the Board, and the rather as we are satisfied that the Roman Catholics will not concur in any system of religious education but under and by themselves. Indeed, the system proposed by the Commissioners of Education seems to us very questionable, and we have no doubt it will meet with great opposition. The establishing—even for the education of the lower orders of the people—an abstract system of Christianity, that shall avoid what is peculiar to each sect and yet preserve what shall be essential, looks very like making a new religion for the country, and establishing by law a precedent for a schism by consent from all churches and sects. We therefore conceive that the Act should not do more than create an effective Board for the education of the lower orders, and leave it to them to consider and adjust the best mode of effecting that purpose.’

But the work so actively begun was not yet to be completed. The Endowed Schools Bill became law; the larger measure for the education of the whole people of Ireland was destined to give way for the present to the more exciting political question of ‘Catholic Relief.’

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

‘Irish Office: May 8, 1813.

‘I had some conversation this morning with Lords Liverpool and Sidmouth. I told them that I had desired the law officers of Ireland to draw up a Bill for the appointment of a Board, but that it was absolutely necessary that I should be apprised of the opinions of the King’s Government upon so important a question as the establishment of a system of education of which the national religion was not to form a part.

‘They appear disposed, I think, to adopt the recommendation of the Commissioners, but wish to have the subject brought under the consideration of the Cabinet.

‘That it has not before been submitted to a Cabinet meeting is not, I can assure you, my fault, as I have scarcely seen Lord Liverpool or Lord Sidmouth once without urging the necessity of calling the attention of the Government here to the education of the lower classes in Ireland.

‘There is one point on which I am, I feel, rather disposed to concur with them in opinion, that the present is an unfavourable moment for the introduction of any measure of general education in Ireland.

‘I think it would have been impossible to introduce any measure until some decision should be come to by the House upon the principle of Grattan’s Bill. And really Mr. Grattan and his friends have introduced the Bill at so late a period of the session that, even if that final and satisfactory adjustment of all the difficulties between the Protestants and Catholics should take place which Mr. Canning and others anticipate, or did anticipate, there would be very little time left during the present session for the introduction of a Bill for the instruction of the poor.’

It appeared moreover that of the Catholic Bishops some were in no mood for friendly co-operation.

*The Duke of Richmond to Mr. Peel.*

‘ May 12, 1813.

‘ On the subject of the Catholic bishops’ views of Irish education, I send you a copy of a letter from Dr. Bellew, the titular Bishop of Killala, written a short time ago to the parish priest of Killyglass. It is a neat performance. His brother, General Bellew, was hanged in Killala in 1798.’

(*Inclosure.*)

‘ Mr. Harrier and I are on Sunday next to call at Killyglass, to cry down these nefarious deistical schools, which the unrelenting enemies of our religion with all their spurious productions have dared to establish. I warn you to command the parents of the growing generation to withdraw their children from such cursed abominable schools, under the pain of excommunication, or even consoling or absolving them at the hour of their deaths.

‘ Let this be done *bis, ter, et sæpissime. Vive et vale.*’

Such were, in Mr. Peel’s first year of Irish office, the parliamentary fortunes of the Catholic question, in its general form, and in its special bearing on the instruction of the people. Its influence on the administrative government of Ireland will appear in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV.

1813-1814.

Administration in Ireland—Official Negligence, Frauds, Jobs, and Peculation—Pensions—Patronage—Change of Viceroy—Responsibilities of the Chief Secretary—Prosecutions and Control of the Press—The Catholic Board—Dependence on the Castle in Dublin—Lawlessness and Disaffection in the Country.

THE ordinary administration of the Irish government, at the time when Mr. Peel undertook it, fell into four departments, civil, military, legal, and financial. For civil and for military affairs there were separate Under Secretaries in Dublin, besides the Under Secretary in London. Legal business was conducted by the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General, neither of whom was in Parliament. Finance was in the hands of an Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, sitting in the House of Commons, but all communications between the Irish and the Imperial Treasuries (as yet separate) passed through the Chief Secretary. He, in short, as the Viceroy's principal adviser, was responsible to the Cabinet and to Parliament for whatever was done or left undone in Ireland.

Young as he was, already, with his father's example at home and two years of training as an Under Secretary of State, Mr. Peel had begun to show that masterly capacity for business for which he afterwards became unrivalled. Prompt, methodical, determined, diligent, exact, he soon made all feel that the reins were in a firm and guiding hand. One of his earliest letters from the Irish Office exemplifies the tact with which he could turn to account a clerical error to enforce on all concerned a higher standard of official accuracy, while the reply proves that the admonition was needed.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘Irish Office: Feb. 18, 1813.

‘I wish you would take the opportunity which the inclosed letter affords of impressing upon the clerks in your office the expediency of paying more attention in writing letters for your signature and mine.

‘I really attach more importance to this subject than at first sight it may seem to deserve. Do let us consider that in a moment when there was a great press of business you might possibly have brought up to me a letter in which orders were given for the apprehension (I will not go further) of an individual, and a similar mistake of a name for another had been made. It is possible that I might (inadvertently, I admit) have signed the letter, not without reading it, perhaps, but without reading its inclosure, or detecting by a recollection of the circumstances the error which had been made.

‘We may all be to blame, but the clerk who wrote the inclosed without ascertaining whether he was superannuating the disabled or the certifying officer, and whose responsibility in office is limited to the verbal accuracy of the letters which he prepares for signature, deserves in my opinion serious admonition.’

*Mr. Gregory to Mr. Peel.*

‘Feb. 22, 1813.

‘I have read to the clerks your very proper lecture on the inaccuracy of our office; but I am sorry to say it was not received as I expected and wished.

‘The blunder was, I believe, committed by old T., who only remarked that no ill consequence could follow, as the mistake could not superannuate the wrong person.

‘The very cool indifference with which the matter was treated, I confess, has annoyed me much, and will cost additional trouble by the necessity of carefully reading every paper previous to signature.’

A similar lecture was required, somewhat later, in the London Office, and was administered with equal courtesy and firmness.

*Mr. Peel to Sir C. Flint.*

‘Sept. 1, 1814.

‘The constant mistakes which have occurred in the Acts of Parliament respecting Ireland are proof that sufficient attention is not paid to insure accuracy. You recollect the serious error that was made by — in the Insurrection Bill, which extended its operations to three instead of two years. We have discovered another in one of the Revenue Bills, and the consequence has been the loss to the revenue of not less probably than forty thousand pounds.

‘There is evidently a mistake in the County Police Act ; at the place where I have marked it some very material words are omitted. I am extremely anxious to ascertain whether this is an error in the printing or in the Roll ; if in the Roll, it is one, I fear, of most material consequence.

‘I know not whose duty it is to prevent such inaccuracies, but I know that it is of the utmost importance that they should be prevented, and it is quite impossible for me to spare time enough to compare the copies word for word with the original drafts. I am sure the draft which I gave was correct. Pray discover where and when the error was made. Let me have as early an answer as possible to this. Have the Roll of Parliament, which determines the law and is the record, examined carefully.’

Such was the official negligence with which Mr. Peel had to contend. When he himself (which happened rarely) had made a slip, he was not less strict in noting it. Having in one case acquiesced in a proposal of the Viceroy to appoint an officer of customs, and afterwards discovering that it would entail expense contrary to the advice of the department, he writes :

‘Bear in mind that I take the blame upon myself. Pray ask the Duke to read over the two letters inclosed. I do not know what he will think of me for advising the appointment at one moment and for repenting of my advice at another,



and of my admission that I had not read with sufficient attention the papers on the subject.'

In the military department he was equally on the watch against indefensible expenditure, and showed from the first the spirit of a reformer. He writes to Sir Edward Littlehales :

'*March 10, 1813.*—The information sent over with the estimates cannot be too much detailed. Questions are asked which it is impossible to anticipate, or to be provided with an answer to them from memory alone.'

'*April 8.*—I will ask your attention to the items for the charge of barrack supplies to the troops. There is only an excess of 6,500*l.* in the charge for Great Britain above that for Ireland. The more my attention is turned to the barrack department, the more I am satisfied that a radical reform is necessary.'

In regard to pecuniary defalcations, which were frequent and had too often been passed over with undue leniency, Mr. Peel was always severe. In one instance, where the culprit's patron (a peer) and the department concerned joined in recommending him to mercy, on the weak ground that the deficit 'was principally occasioned by the improper conduct of one of his own family,' Peel writes :

'It may have been so, but I know that if we admit that plea any dishonest defaulter will make the same, and will throw upon us the onus of disproving it. I believe it was the King of Prussia who flogged a man whose hat was really blown off in a high wind. It was not the man's fault, but the effect of the flogging was that his comrades secured their hats against the wind, and none were blown off. I think Mr. O. should be dismissed, the appointment of his successor offered to Lord E., and the Stamps informed that the ground of their recommendation was not satisfactory. I have had a hard fight with E., but I have reconciled him to O.'s dismissal.'

In the Customs Department in his first year he discovered frauds committed by the collectors in the outports by returning

goods in store which were in fact in possession of the merchants. Shortly afterwards he detected a discreditable trick of a great company receiving parliamentary assistance.

‘I have been obliged to reprimand the Grand Canal Company, who have descended to unworthy and ungrateful artifices. I inquired from them previously to the advance of the 50,000*l.* whether they had complied with the provision of the Act which directed the investment of the full sum of 30,000*l.* Irish currency to meet unforeseen contingencies. They assured me they had, and that the money was in the bank. I really was deceived by this assurance. It was impossible to suspect them of a wilful falsehood, but I thought it due to the munificence of Parliament to act with caution, and sent privately to the bank to ascertain the fact. I found that they had invested 30,000*l.* indeed nominally, but it was in 3½ per cent. stock, so that they had not in fact invested 20,000*l.*’

As regards the Department of Public Works he writes :

‘I return those ponderous and lengthy documents which accompany the Skibbereen Report. I have toiled through them, and the chief impression which they have left on my mind is one of surprise at the zeal and devotion with which a respectable body of men [the Grand Jury of the County of Cork] have laboured in defence of as notorious a job as ever graced the annals of Irish history. As they are a party to it, however, there is perhaps no great cause for surprise.

‘I think we have done our duty in pressing for an inquiry, and I have no doubt the publicity which has been given to this case, the suspension of advances, the charge of the judges &c. will do some good. The more I see of the system, the more I am convinced of its radical defects.’

Another letter relates to the Teller of the Exchequer, who was in receipt of 2,000*l.* a year for discharging his duties by deputy.

‘There cannot in my opinion be a much greater offence than the improper use of public money. At least there is none which can appear more grave to those who are entrusted with the government of the country, and are particularly responsible for the application of the public funds. Mr. N. has derived emoluments in consequence of the violation of an express order of the Treasury by his deputy, of which he must have been cognisant. I must own it appears to me that it will be very embarrassing to us to undertake the palliation of his conduct, and our own justification for continuing him in office.

‘I asked Vansittart in what way he thought N. should be treated. His answer was, “I know how he would be treated in any other country than Ireland.”’

In a case of malversation in a yeomanry corps, Mr. Peel at once expresses a decided opinion that ‘the most effectual measures should be taken for the purpose of making a severe example of those who have been implicated in this disgraceful transaction,’ and calls for ‘a detailed account of the regulations, stating the several checks upon the expenditure, and the persons who are responsible. I want particularly to know how far the commanding officer is responsible; I am sure he ought to be in a very high degree.’

On all such administrative as well as on legislative questions the Viceroy and his Chief Secretary appear to have been invariably at one, with the exception of a single passing difference of opinion as to Irish pensions. By a bargain made with the Irish Parliament in 1793, the Crown could grant 1,200*l.* a year in new pensions, until the old pension list should fall below 80,000*l.* This event having happened in March 1813 by the death of the Duchess of Brunswick, who had 5,000*l.* a year from Ireland, the Viceroy, pressed by needy members of the aristocracy and by ‘Union promises,’ was disposed at once to fill up the list to 80,000*l.* in addition to the 1,200*l.* Mr. Peel, on the contrary, thought it necessary to consult the law officers as to the powers of the Crown, and also counselled moderation in the use of them, enforcing his advice by parliamentary considerations.

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

‘April 9, 1813.

‘There cannot be a doubt that the attention of Parliament will be called to the state of our Pension Fund, and we must consider how much greater, comparatively speaking, the power of the Lord Lieutenant in this respect is, than that of the British Government. The pension list of Great Britain, the seat of the Imperial Legislature, is limited to 90,000*l.* per annum, and the pension list of Ireland may amount to 80,000*l.* per annum.

‘I am confident that, when the time shall come for making new regulations in regard to our pension list, it will be found quite impossible to continue it to anything near its present amount; but it will be of great service to us to be enabled to prove that, whatever our power might have been, our exercise of it had not been liable to objection.

‘I think the Pension Fund ought to be applied to the support of persons who either have rendered a service to the public, or who are nearly related to those who have, and to enable those who have rank and title, and no means of maintaining them, to live at least with decency. Whatever may be the power of the Irish Government, they are of course responsible for its exercise, and I own I think it would be difficult to defend the grant of 850*l.* by way of pension to Mr. A. and Col. N.’

Although the law officers confirmed Mr. Peel’s doubts as to the strict legality of the proposed pensions, the Lord Lieutenant still desired to grant a few of them, good-humouredly remarking, ‘I suspect you are all of you afraid of Bankes and his committee.’ Mr. Peel, however, standing firm, the Duke gracefully yielded.

*The Duke of Richmond to Mr. Peel.*

‘I am perfectly willing to give way to your opinions on the pensions. I assure you I am as unwilling to differ with you as you can be to differ with me, and I don’t know a

better way of showing it than by saying that I think your arguments good, and mean to drop the subject.'

In distributing political patronage the Duke continued to place himself very much in Mr. Peel's hands. In regard to vacancies on the Revenue Boards he writes :

'I have now given you my opinion, but, knowing the principles on which you act, I assure you I shall not be obstinate, but ready to follow your advice. The act must be mine, but I wish you not only to have great weight with me, but that it should be known you have, as that will add to your weight amongst our members.'

Early in the summer of 1813 it was arranged that the Duke of Richmond should be succeeded in Ireland by Lord Whitworth, best known as ambassador in Paris when Napoleon went to war with Great Britain in 1803. It being understood that his policy would be much the same as his predecessor's, Mr. Peel not only himself consented to stay, but negotiated for the Duke's private secretary to remain with Lord Whitworth. 'This,' writes the Duke, 'has given very great satisfaction to our friends. That, and your continuing in office, shows them that the system they approve of is to be continued.' Mr. Peel replies : 'All that I see of Lord Whitworth convinces me that his appointment is a good one.'

On this occasion an attack was made on the Duke of Richmond in Parliament by Sir Henry Montgomery, who said 'he trusted that the new Lord Lieutenant would show an example of sobriety to the country, and that they would not hear of midnight orgies, of songs and toasts tending to inflame one part of his Majesty's subjects against another.' This insinuation Mr. Peel repelled with warmth, affirming that 'no governor had ever shown a more firm determination to conciliate all parties. What had been said regarding orgies and revels he should leave unanswered as unworthy of reply.'

About the same time it fell to his lot to soothe the wounded feelings of the Prince Regent, who was in great wrath at a coarse, and in Lord Eldon's opinion libellous, speech of O'Connell on his relations with his Princess. By promptitude in referring this to the Irish law officers, and tact in conveying their opinion against prosecution, Mr. Peel gained such high approval as to receive from Carlton House an invitation to wear

the very handsome uniform of his Royal Highness, with a recommendation to employ the Prince's tailor.

The following letters belong to the period of transition from the old Lord-Lieutenancy to the new :

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

‘ July 1, 1813.

‘ I saw the Prince last night at the fête, and he talked to me for some time. He said, “ You had reason to be in a rage last night, for I never saw a more shameful attack than that which was made upon the Duke of Richmond.” ’

‘ Irish Office : July 3, 1813, half-past twelve.

‘ I congratulate you most sincerely on one of the most splendid victories over the French that has ever been achieved by the British army.

‘ The battle was fought near Vittoria, and the result has been a loss to the French of 151 pieces of cannon and 415 waggons of ammunition. The inclosed proof copy of the gazette, the first taken from the press, contains a full detail of the operations.

‘ Lord Wellington writes, half in jest and half in earnest, that he will plant the British standard on French ground in six days from the date of his letters.’

To Mr. Gregory, Mr. Peel writes : ‘ Have a gazette extraordinary published as soon as possible.’ To Sir E. Littlehales, ‘ Let the guns be fired immediately ;’ and to the coming Viceroy :

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘ I congratulate you most heartily on the news. It will produce a great effect in Ireland. Success in the Peninsula is more heart-sickening to the rebels than in any other quarter of the globe, as they conceive, and with justice, that hostile designs against Ireland can be carried on with greater effect from the northern part of the Peninsula than from anywhere else.

‘ I inclose an Irish paper, and beg to call your attention to by far the most daring and impudent proposition that has ever yet issued from the Catholic Board. Mr. O’Gorman proposes, and the meeting approves of his suggestion, that the Board should consider whether the interference of Spain and Portugal should not be sought, in order to induce Great Britain to emancipate the Irish Catholics.’

Lord Whitworth, a diplomatist of twice Peel’s years, replies calmly :

‘ July 4, 1813.

‘ I hope Lord Wellington will stand our friend. He is now serving the Irish Government more effectually than he ever did before at any period.

‘ I do not understand how Spain and Portugal are to assist unless they send a detachment of inquisitors.’

The exciting news was sent by Mr. Peel also to his father, who answers with composure, passing on to a question of unwise proposed taxation.

‘ Tamworth: July 7, 1813.

‘ My dear Robert,—Your letter inclosing a gazette extraordinary was very acceptable. The close of the session is likely to be more placid, owing to the late victory. As ministers are blamed for unfortunate public events, it is reasonable that they should derive some credit from prosperous occurrences.

‘ You are silent respecting the proposition of Alderman Atkins. I think his plan [to tax American cotton heavily during the war] has a mischievous tendency as regards trade. It is dictated by interested merchants, and the effect, I fear, will be that it will be taken up by ministers for the purpose of revenue, and will afford an excuse for taxing a raw material on which a manufacture of the first consequence to the nation depends.

‘ The children are all well, and have spent two-thirds of their holidays. I find the objects and pursuits of their

minds are as infantine as were their brothers', and sisters', now at maturity.

'I am, my dear Robert, your affectionate father,  
' ROBERT PEEL.'

On July 23, Mr. Peel returned to Ireland. A few days later he attended the trial of Mr. Magee, editor of the 'Dublin Evening Post,' and for the first time met O'Connell, whom he describes as 'an eloquent and vulgar speaker.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'Dublin Castle : Aug. 1, 1813.

'I have passed two of the few days I have been in Ireland in the Court of King's Bench, expecting to be summoned as a witness and to be examined by Mr. O'Connell. Although Mr. Fitzgerald and myself were at his elbow, he did not think fit to put a question to us.

'The trial was very interesting. O'Connell spoke four hours, completely but intentionally abandoning the cause of his client (I have no doubt, with his client's consent), taking that opportunity of uttering a libel even more and atrocious than that which he proposed to defend, upon Government and the administration of justice in Ireland. His abuse of the Attorney-General was more scurrilous and vulgar than was ever permitted within the walls of a court of justice. He insulted the jury individually and collectively, accused the Chief Justice of corruption and prejudice against his client, and avowed himself a traitor, if not to Ireland at least to the British Empire.

'You will find me quite knocked up with the conviviality which precedes the Duke's departure.'

Lord Whitworth replies : 'I congratulate you with all my heart on having got through all the bore of the trial. What a set of ruffians ! I confess I should be jealous were any steps taken before I come, towards the suppression of such a combination of vice and folly.'

The late Chief Secretary now reappeared in Dublin.



*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

'Dublin Castle: Aug. 3, 1813.

'Pole is arrived here, and "oh matchless impudence!" (as General Matthew has it) invited himself to the Duke to dinner on this day, the Duke (it being Lord March's birthday) having invited three friends, and I believe three only, all admirably adapted to pass a festive hour with the illustrious stranger—the Chancellor, the Attorney-General, and myself [three chief opponents of the Catholic cause, to which Mr. Pole had been suddenly converted]. I have not yet discovered any topic on which we can venture a word except the weather, and that happens to be very changeable.

'I can fancy Pole counting every toast, and watching with anxiety every revolution of the bottle, as advancing him nearer to the awful and forgotten sound of "The Glorious Memory." To be sure there is nothing in the glorious memory at all personal to himself, but he won't like it.'

As to the policy to be expected from the new Lord Lieutenant, Mr. Peel took care there should be no mistake.

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Richmond.*

'Sept. 13, 1813.

'You will be amused with the inclosed most impudent attempt of the "Dublin Evening Post" to persuade the people that Lord Whitworth is come to act upon Liberal principles, or "to give general satisfaction."

'I knew that many people would be imposed upon, and I called upon Lord Whitworth immediately, and proposed to him to publish his real answer [to the University of Dublin], and that I should write a paragraph for the "Patriot," which by making its appearance in the paper particularly connected with the Government should satisfy their friends and others that Lord Whitworth was not so easily duped.

Of course I have not mentioned to anyone that it was written by me. It is needless to assure you that Lord Whitworth was equally disgusted with the fabrication and with the flattery.

‘As a proof of the necessity of exposing the forgery, Littlehales was at Carlow yesterday and met Montague Matthew. After dinner Matthew took up the paper, and to his unbounded delight read the account of the address and the answer. He immediately proposed Lord Whitworth’s health, adding that “By God, he was the Lord Lieutenant for Ireland, and that he was proud of his noble relative.”’

‘Sept. 18.—Mr. Leyden, the guilty author of the forgery, has been this day expelled from Trinity College. You had already expelled him from the Accountant-General’s Office. His excuse for fabricating Lord Whitworth’s answer was that he had a vacant hour, and had employed it in composition.’

*The Duke of Richmond to Mr. Peel.*

‘Sept. 13, 1813.

‘I rejoice at your account of the Lord Mayor’s dinner, and hope before long the Corporation will call Lord Whitworth “our Viscount,” as they do me the honour to call me “our Duke.” The Lord Mayor has a very pretty method of getting drunk. He is so well used to it that he knows his way back in the dark, and is always sober when he gets up the next morning.’

‘Sept. 25.—I saw the Prince Regent on Saturday last, for an hour. He asked many questions about Ireland, and particularly about the Catholic views.

‘I told him I was convinced the leaders, O’Connell, O’Gorman &c., would always force the timid peers of Ireland, Lord Fingall and others, into their measures, which were to do away English connection; that I was convinced some were weak enough to believe Ireland could support itself as a separate nation, and that others were

wicked enough to wish for French connection. I advised most strongly *nothing* being granted to them, for that nothing which could be given would satisfy them.

‘I was delighted to find H.R.H. as steady a Protestant as the Attorney-General. It is his decided opinion that the Catholics are further than ever from their object. Some of our friends will rejoice in this, and it will be very right for you to mention it as a private communication, but of course it must not find its way into the newspapers.’

‘April 24, 1814.—I went to Brighton to-day to pay my respects to the Prince Regent. We dined at the Pavilion, about sixty people. To my great surprise H.R.H. gave my health in a bumper. He gave me as “a former representative of his, whose conduct had given him entire satisfaction, and who had kept a country a good deal difficult to manage in very good order in difficult times.” He then said “he was obliged to go to the ladies, but he should leave his company in the hands of one of his oldest and best friends, Charles Lennox, who he trusted would give them wine enough.” I obeyed orders.’

The reappointment of Mr. Peel as Chief Secretary to Lord Whitworth being held to necessitate his re-election, it was secured by the ever ready help of his father, who had also had in view arrangements tending to provide in permanence a second seat at Tamworth.

*Sir Robert Peel to Mr. Peel.*

‘Oct. 19, 1813.

‘I should hope that your seat is not disturbed by the appointment of a new Lord Lieutenant. Should competent lawyers decide differently, you will as cheerfully submit to the trouble of a fresh election as I shall to the expense attending it.

‘Since you left us I have carried on a correspondence on the subject of the Townshends’ property in this neighbourhood, and finding that the terms demanded continued exorbitant, I have given up all thoughts of making a purchase.

The sum last insisted on was 160,000*l.* for a property which never has yielded 1,000*l.* per annum; and if a seat in Parliament is to be deemed an object, that sum cannot be more than doubled.'

Shortly after the change of Lord Lieutenant, the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, being in London, urged upon the Prime Minister a proposal for placing the Irish in direct communication with the British Treasury, independently of the Chief Secretary, and was understood to intend, unless his view were adopted, to resign. Upon this the Prime Minister made a counter-proposal, that the Chief Secretary should add the duties of the Chancellor to his own. The correspondence which ensued is of interest as placing in the clearest light the view taken by Mr. Peel of the general responsibilities of his office. While determined not to part with financial control, and the power derived from it, he acts throughout with great delicacy towards his colleague, deprecating premature acceptance of his resignation.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

'Sept. 25, 1813.

'I must advert to that part of your letter which refers to the union of the offices of the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

'However gratified I must have been by the opinion that the duties of both offices might be entrusted to me, and however sorry I should be to throw any difficulties in the way of an arrangement which was thought desirable on public grounds, I must admit that I should have the greatest objection to the union of the offices in my person.

'I assure you that I have not much time to spare from the duties of my present office. But I should be very little mindful of the additional labour, or of any personal inconvenience, which the transfer of those of the Chancellorship of the Exchequer might occasion, if I thought that I could undertake them with advantage to the public service or satisfaction to myself. The difficulty would not be so great in the recess, but I could not venture to undertake the conduct of the whole parliamentary business of Ireland in the House of Commons.'

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

*(Private and confidential.)*

Walmer Castle: Oct. 4, 1813.

‘My dear Peel,—I have had a great deal of conversation with some of my colleagues, and I believe that we are all agreed that it is absolutely impracticable to draw that sort of line between the duties and powers of the Chief Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer which Fitzgerald seems to be desirous shall be marked out.

‘The unity of the Government in Ireland under the Lord Lieutenant must be preserved; the Chief Secretary is the channel through which the power and patronage in Ireland must flow. They ought to be exercised, undoubtedly, with every attention to those who are at the head of other departments; and with mutual good understanding, there need never be any material difficulty. Without it, there must always be a question of authority or conflict.

‘If any person were to ask me to define the duties and powers of the First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer in this country, I could not do it. This very circumstance may have led to the union of these two offices, much oftener than to their separation. They have, however, at times, been separated, and the Government has gone on with perfect harmony and concord.

‘Judging from all I have known of Ireland itself, I do not see that anything but evil and inconvenience can arise from a supposed equality between the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which, as the Chief Secretary is the organ of the Lord Lieutenant, must put the Chancellor of the Exchequer upon an equality with the latter. That was the game of Foster. We know the consequences of it, and that it led to the temporary union of the two offices in Pole.

‘Under present circumstances, I certainly think that it would be for the public advantage that *you* should unite the two offices. The business of the revenue is amongst the most important and arduous duties of the Irish Govern-

ment, and the authority of the Chief Secretary, holding the two offices, would be greater than that of any Chancellor of the Exchequer, such as he ought to be. The patronage and power would thus be united as far as is necessary, and any conflicts of departments would be averted. If you should, however, continue to feel this union of the two offices impracticable or inconvenient, the next consideration is to endeavour to find some proper person who will understand the nature of the Irish Government, and who will cordially co-operate with you for the public service.

‘I have written to Fitzgerald as you desire, and inclose a copy of my letter. I have endeavoured to make it as kind personally to him as possible.

‘Believe me to be, my dear Peel,

‘Very affectionately yours,

‘LIVERPOOL.’

*Mr. Fitzgerald to Lord Liverpool.*

‘Oct. 18, 1813.

‘With Peel I have had more than one long conversation upon the subject of our letters, and I confess I regret to find that he carries his view of it even farther than your Lordship. I have spoken to him as a friend rather than as a colleague. Whatever he may feel, or however he and I may differ in opinion, we shall, I am sure, each of us do justice to the ground upon which the other acts.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘Oct. 20, 1813.

‘I explained to Fitzgerald very fully the view which I take of the subject upon which you wrote to him, and which I regret is so different from his own.

‘I told him that I considered my office quite identified with that of the Lord Lieutenant, as I can do no act whatever independent of his authority, and that the point at

issue is not between the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but between the latter and the Lord Lieutenant.

‘All the experience I have had since I came into office confirms the opinion—which, even without that experience, might, I think, have been very naturally formed—that in a country situated and governed as this is, there ought to be a paramount authority somewhere, an authority not merely superior to all others, but one upon which all others are dependent. Fitzgerald wishes that the Lord Lieutenant should resign all control, practically at least, over the Boards of Revenue, and all direct correspondence with them, and that they should apply in future to the Treasury for instructions and authority on which to act. I consider that this would be highly inexpedient, nor do I conceive that the Lord Lieutenant would be considered the chief governor of a country wherein the financial concerns were committed exclusively to the management of a separate and independent department, presiding too, as it naturally would, over all the commercial interests of that country.

‘And why should not other departments, as well as the Treasury, seek for the transfer to themselves exclusively of that authority which is held by the Lord Lieutenant? I think that the Commander of the Forces might with equal reason protest against all interference with the military under his command, and against the correspondence which the Chief Secretary carries on with the generals in command of districts, and might require that all applications for detachments and military assistance in aid of the civil power should be made to him. We do exercise a much greater control over the military than is exercised by any civil authority in Great Britain, but it is necessary for the preservation of the public peace while we continue responsible for it. The Commander of the Forces might say, and perhaps very justly, that he will undertake to preserve the public peace without any interference on the part of the Lord Lieutenant; but if the magistrates are to look to the Commander-in-Chief for aid and protection, and all persons

connected with revenue matters are to appeal to the Treasury, the Chief Governor of Ireland would be left with very few of the attributes of supreme authority.

‘I hope I do not take a prejudiced view of this unpleasant subject, and that I am not much actuated by that spirit of punctilio and etiquette which men in office sometimes have. However desirous I should be to exclude all personal feeling from the consideration of it, I must in candour admit, as I told Fitzgerald yesterday, that after having held my present office for more than a year, and having accepted it on the presumption that I should continue to hold it on the terms on which my predecessors did, I never could see with satisfaction a formal arrangement proclaimed by which a part of the duties and labours which had always been attached to it was to be transferred to another.

‘I do not blame Fitzgerald, nay, I cannot answer for it that if I were in the same office I might not have a similar feeling. I will even admit in my present situation that it is possible that the revenue would be benefited by the arrangements which he proposes, and by the transfer from the Lord Lieutenant of all the revenue patronage to those who are directly and immediately responsible for the collection of the revenue; provided, which I doubt extremely, that you would insure, in the latter case, the application of the patronage to revenue purposes.

‘But it will be advisable to new-constitute the office of the Lord Lieutenant, and to new-model the Government of Ireland, before you deprive it of those means of influence which are, I fear, already too limited. I shall be glad when the time arrives that the government of this country can be conducted on different principles from what it at present is, when you can look for support (and I do not mean merely parliamentary support, but that effectual support which active and loyal men can afford in this country) to an honest conviction of its necessity and a pure sense of duty.

‘But that time is not yet arrived, and till it does arrive you must either try to carry on the government without such



support, or you must (and I fear there is no misapplication of the term) purchase it.'

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

'(Private.)

'Fife House: Oct. 21, 1813.

'I have had a letter from Fitzgerald, which is so far satisfactory that he appears very much pleased by the manner in which I opened the subject to him. Since writing to you on this subject, it has seriously occurred to us whether, if he perseveres in resigning, and the acceptance of the office continues to be disagreeable to you, we might not take this opportunity of uniting the two Treasuries and consolidating the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer in Ireland with that of Chancellor of the Exchequer in Great Britain. Lord Castlereagh and Lord Sidmouth strongly favour this arrangement. Let me know your opinion and that of Lord Whitworth.'

Any further communications on the subject at this time appear to have passed in conversation. In 1815 the question was referred to a Select Committee of the House of Commons, and the two Exchequers were united in 1816.

Meanwhile, full as were his hands, Mr. Peel had spare energy enough to aspire, while the war lasted, to add to his duties more control of the naval service for Ireland.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

'Aug. 16, 1813.

'I wish you would let me have the stationing of H.M. ships on the coast of Ireland. I lead the life of an admiral, in making arrangements for the capture of American privateers. There is one, as I sent you word last night, off the coast of Wicklow, and I do not know what vessels are in Lough Swilly. I am sorry we sent off the "Port Mahon" the other day from her cruising ground. The privateer is the "Argus," carries eighteen 32-pounders and two long eighteen. I think she will go North about.'

From many notices in his correspondence it appears that from the first Mr. Peel found time to work also another powerful but often neglected engine of Government. With Palmerston and Croker, he had previously tried his hand in light political contributions to the 'Courier,' and now, sensitively alive to the importance of Irish public opinion, and to the influence of newspapers in forming opinion, before he had been many days in Dublin he wrote to Lord Liverpool: 'I am very anxious to do something with the press in Ireland, and I am not quite without hopes that we may put it on a better footing.' A month later he asks Mr. Croker: 'Have you looked at the "Correspondent" lately? Your advice, you will perceive, was not thrown away. But it is easier to silence an enemy's battery than to establish one of your own, at least in the contests of the press. I would give anything for your turn for a paragraph, it would be invaluable here.' He adds a long list of provincial papers 'which give the Irish Government the honour of their free and independent support.' To the chief organs in Dublin, besides occasional articles, he was in the habit of sending revised reports of speeches, and semi-official announcements from his own pen.

To keep the friendly scribes in order, and at peace with one another, was sometimes no easy task.

*Mr. Gregory to Mr. Peel.*

'Feb. 5, 1813.

'The editor of the "Hibernian Journal" has been pleased to let off a flaming puff upon both of us, for which he shall get a jobation. The Duke says it is my writing, but as you are absent I shall of course attribute it to you.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'March 12, 1813.

'The "Correspondent" has made a very good fight for us lately. Saxton says he had no idea it would have come forward so gallantly as it has done on some occasions against the "Dublin Evening Post."

'I certainly think that the papers in our pay ought not to attack each other. Pole will say they must take the example of their masters the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The editor of the "Corre-

spondent" hopes, I have no doubt, to interest me, because he thinks he raises my value by depreciating that of Pole, and because the "Hibernian" attacks a paragraph in the "Correspondent" in which I appear (in his opinion at least) to great advantage. I need not disclaim to you any such motives on my part for deprecating the hostility of the Government papers against each other.'

A mean trick on the part of a Government paper Mr. Peel treats with indignation as deserving not censure only, but punishment.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'May 13, 1813.

'I am extremely sorry to perceive that the "Dublin Journal" has inserted a gross forgery professing to be a protest of the Catholics of Ireland against the Bill for their relief. I think this a most unworthy mode of opposition, and nothing can be more prejudicial to our cause. Mr. Gifford may argue as he pleases against the Catholics, but nothing can justify the attempt to impose upon the public in this way.

'I think this man has done us a serious injury. He has risked the entire loss of the proclamation fund,<sup>1</sup> for I am sure you will see in the present temper of the House how much the difficulty of defending the proclamations is increased. I have myself no doubt that we ought to withdraw the proclamations from that paper.

'I wish that you could speak to the Duke of Richmond on this subject. Strong as his opinion is against the proposed concession to the Roman Catholics, I am sure he will agree with me that our opposition to their claims should be manly and direct. It will be ten times as effectual. It is nothing for Mr. Gifford to answer that the Catholics descend to unworthy artifices. If they do (and I believe they do) they injure their cause, but their falsehood is no justification of his, and will be still less a justification of the Irish

<sup>1</sup> About 10,000*l.* a year, practically a subsidy to friendly newspapers.

Government which supports the channel through which his impositions are conveyed.'

A similar reproof had to be administered to the 'Patriot' for malicious libel.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'June 10, 1814.

'It is the right (nay the duty, perhaps, and one which they neglect) of papers in our interest to make attacks upon the political characters and proceedings of our adversaries, but I must say that I shall regret the insertion in a paper so completely and exclusively supported by Government as the "Patriot" is, of a libel affecting the private character of an opponent. I wish the "Patriot" would expose Sir John Newport's politics and public proceedings ten times as much as it does, but innuendoes and indecent insinuations will do more harm to us than to him, and are unfair weapons to make use of.

'If I knew any anecdote in Sir John's private life which was not very creditable to him, I should think it unfair to combat him with it as a political antagonist. If I doubted the truth of it, I should think it very dishonourable; and I regret, I own, that a paper wholly supported by Government money has been the channel of conveying such an insinuation.'

The hostile press also received no small share of Mr. Peel's attention. Proceedings against the Catholic organ, the 'Evening Post,' ending in the imprisonment of its editor, have already been mentioned. The first two prosecutions were quickly followed by a third. A meeting of Catholics, resenting the punishment of Magee, passed resolutions condemning it, which were held to be 'a gross libel upon the Government, and more particularly upon the administration of justice.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Desart.*

'Aug. 10, 1814.

'Your Kilkenny resolutions are the most impudent and extravagant I ever read. I have advised their prosecution, and I shall be disappointed if we cannot strike at higher

game than the printer. I hope those who presided at their birth may have the manliness to avow themselves as the authors. If they do we will try to give them the advantages of "martyrdom," as they are pleased to call imprisonment. Let me know what you think of the attempt to make this example. I do not want to do anything irritating; but when are we to interfere, if we abstain in this case? God knows our hands are sufficiently tied up, and the means we have to employ against our opponents are very limited. But such as they are, we should bring them into operation. At least if we do not we must admit that the genius of libel cannot be controlled.

'I hope Mr. O'Connell will defend them, and I hope the Chief Justice will not allow the Court to be again insulted and made the vehicle of treason, but that he will do what I am sure Lord Ellenborough would, interrupt his harangue by committing him to Newgate for contempt of court.

'There is in these resolutions an insinuation at least sufficiently intelligible that the judge who tried Magee was partial, the jury corrupt, and the law officer who conducted the trial venal, and a direct assertion that the Government ministers to intrigue, intolerance, and injustice.

'If this had been asserted by any Protestant or any body of Protestants, we should not have overlooked it, and why should Magee and Bryan be entitled to more indulgence? To equal they ought undoubtedly.'

For want of evidence against the movers of these resolutions, the printer was a third time convicted, nearly escaping, however, through the usual Irish official carelessness in respect of such a trifle as the date of publication.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

'Conceive, Croker (as I should say if I were talking to you), our prosecution against Magee being directed against the insertion of the Kilkenny resolutions in his paper of August 14, O'Connell's whole and nearly successful defence being that the same resolutions had appeared in the "Corre-

spondent," a Government paper, of the 12th, and the discovery that they had, in fact, appeared in the "Evening Post" [Magee's paper] of the 10th not made until the trial was over. If we had been defeated!'

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'Your story about the libel trial would be incredible to anyone who knew less of the Irish way of doing business than I do. But I own, Peel (to answer you *vivâ voce*), if I were in your place I should take care that the agent who committed this monstrous blunder should never lead the Government into another scrape.'

About the same time, Mr. Peel had under consideration the question of taking action against an organised body which from the first he had regarded with jealousy. One difficulty under which Irish Catholics lay in pressing their claim to equal civil rights was that they could hardly assemble to take common counsel without exposing themselves to prosecution. The Convention Act passed by the Irish Parliament in 1793 forbade any mode of representation or delegation in political questions, other than that provided by law. The Catholics nevertheless had formed a deliberative 'Committee,' to consist of Catholic peers and their eldest sons, Catholic baronets, Catholic bishops, and ten members from each county of Ireland. But no sooner had they met, in October 1811, than their chairman, Lord Fingall, was arrested, and the Committee suppressed, by Mr. Pole. The place of this Committee had since been taken by a Catholic 'Board,' to the proceedings of which the new Chief Secretary devoted much attention, watching his opportunity to destroy it as a dangerous association for promoting discontent and sedition. But, uncertain of his legal powers, he was careful not to attempt this prematurely.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'London: June 12, 1813.

'I have been giving a good deal of consideration to the late proceedings of the Catholic Board, and after thinking of all that can be urged in favour of and against interference, I am strongly inclined to agree with the Attorney-

General that it would be premature. At least when we do interfere with them we should do it with decision and effect.

‘It does not appear to me that under the law as it at present stands we can put down by the mere authority of the Executive Government that assembly which you justly term “a Jacobin Club.” We must appeal to Parliament for fresh powers, when we have determined to put an end to its existence, and I fear that this is not the best moment for making that appeal.

‘It would appear as if we were elated by our success on the Catholic Bill, and disposed to push our triumph as far as we could, if we were to choose this moment for an attempt to suppress a meeting the existence of which had been permitted for two years previous to our victory.

‘I believe most firmly that sooner or later we must interfere—that we must not only crush the Board, but must destroy the seeds of future boards, committees, and conventions. We must have a law which shall not, like the Convention Act, enable those against whom it is directed to triumph over the Government by changing the letters of the name by which they are called.

‘I do not think matters are quite ripe for the introduction of such a law, though they are maturing very fast.’

Burdened at this time with inevitable responsibilities, in discharging which he spared himself no toil, Mr. Peel found it necessary to resist firmly the tendency of the Irish to lean on Government in cases where the proper remedy was self-help. On one occasion a heavy fall of snow having made it necessary to define the several duties in such an emergency of private citizens, of local authorities, and of ‘the Castle,’ he writes to his Under Secretary in London :

*Mr. Peel to Sir Charles Flint.*

‘There is a disposition in Ireland, which I will do all in my power to check, to refer everything to “Government.” There is not a private grievance, a failure in trade, a nuisance in the streets, that does not beget an application.

‘I assure you that I can scarcely make people believe that the Government has not the power of clearing the whole country from the snow. I was yesterday gravely informed by a deputation of merchants that their trade was suffering by the want of a free communication in the streets of Dublin, and that the employment of 5,000*l.* in carting away the snow would be very advantageous.

‘I told them I was heartily glad that they were punished for their own want of exertion, or that of the parishes, and that after the Government had granted the assistance of the Garrison, the Commissariat, the Paving Board, and every other public department, it was rather too much to expect that they would undertake the duty of each individual to clear away the snow from their own doors.

‘As for the repeal of laws, and other trifling matters of that nature, I believe there are nine persons in ten who are convinced that the Government is in no way bound by an act of the Legislature, and has a general power over the lives and property and liberty of the people. Nay, I think the majority have the same idea of the Government which the natives of India are said to have of the East India Company. I hope indeed they do not take it for an old woman, but I verily believe that they attach to the Government all the attributes of omnipotence, which it is peculiarly disposed to exert in every species of job and fraud and peculation.’

While some classes, especially in the towns, thus looked helplessly to the Government as a kind of Providence above all law, others in country districts set law and government equally at defiance. Mr. Peel had not been many months Chief Secretary before he became painfully familiar with the murderous outrages practised to coerce men of independent spirit, and with the barbarous apathy, if not approval, shown by neighbours present on such occasions as spectators. The following instance was one of many which soon deeply impressed on him how great a change must be effected before Ireland could justly claim rank as a civilised country.



*Mr. Gregory to Mr. Peel.*

‘April 14, 1813.

‘You doubtless recollect the case of an inferior farmer named Geoghagan, whose house was attacked by a large party—that he defended himself, two men were killed at the door, and another was found dead next morning. He was rewarded by the Lord Lieutenant with 100*l.*, and the grand jury made a private subscription for him.

‘On Sunday last he was at mass at his parish chapel, and after service, whilst conversing with some persons close to the door of the chapel, an assassin shot him from behind and lodged two balls in his back. Although hundreds were present, not the slightest attempt was made to seize the villain, and no pursuit was attempted.

‘What a melancholy picture of the state of society does this transaction exhibit! His only crime was presuming to resist the lawless attempts of these nightly ruffians to rob him of his arms. His religion was the same as theirs, but his resistance might have stimulated others, which would have frustrated their plans.

‘Next to the deed itself is the horror that so many witnesses of it should have made no effort to seize the perpetrator. That many knew of the intention I have not the least doubt, but that not one of the immense crowd should have made any exertion does surprise me.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘April 17, 1813.

‘Nothing could describe more effectively the state of lawless society in Ireland than the recital in your letter.

‘The evil is one which only admits, I fear, of gradual and tardy reform. It is an evil which (like the tenets of the Catholics according to Dr. Milner) cannot be touched by our parchments, and the gulf must be wide indeed that is interposed between [the present state and] the perfect civilisation of Ireland, when a whole congregation assembled to

\ pay homage to their Creator could be the abettors of so foul an attempt at murder.

‘ We shall have little reason to impute barbarism to those ages in which the altar was a place of refuge and security to the greatest offender, when in our own times it is selected as the chosen place for assassination, and when the assassin escapes with impunity.’

While thus recognising as the chief and permanent cause of Irish crime a low state of civilisation, which only long persistence in remedial measures could improve, Mr. Peel had soon perceived the urgent need, especially in the remoter country districts, of more protection for life and individual liberty of action, and was already engaged in thinking out plans of his own for strengthening the police.

During the autumn of 1813, in the absence of Mr. Gregory, he himself conducted the whole correspondence with magistrates and other gentlemen, in whom he had confidence, in various districts as to apprehensions of serious disturbance. The tone of many communications received was alarming, and active steps were taken where required to furnish military help. But while carefully sifting exaggerated reports, and quietly considering in his own mind more permanent arrangements for the defence of law and order, Mr. Peel did not as yet resolve to ask for any renewal of Sir Arthur Wellesley’s Insurrection Act, repealed in 1810, or for a new Police Act. Among other motives for delay was the desire of the new Lord Lieutenant, before applying for further powers, to see and judge for himself.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘ Oct. 15, 1813.

‘ In the North of Ireland there is a growing spirit of animosity between the lower orders of the Protestant and Catholic population; it has broken out at some of the fairs, and many lives have been lost. The combinations of Orangemen, and Ribbonmen (as the Catholics call themselves), are increasing their numbers respectively. We find it, I assure you, a most difficult task when anti-Catholicism (if I may so call it) and loyalty are so much united as they are in the Orangemen, to appease the one without discouraging the other. I believe, however, that the

administration of justice (so far at least as the exercise of mercy by the Lord Lieutenant is concerned) has not been impeached, and that there is no impression whatever on the mind of the Catholic that the case of each party has not been viewed through a medium perfectly impartial.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Sidmouth.*

'Oct. 21, 1813.

'It appears to me, that the Catholics of this country may be considered as divided into four classes—the clergy, the lower orders of the people, the moderate and respectable part of the Catholics, and the violent party, with O'Connell and Scully at their head. Between the latter and the great body of respectable Catholics there are, I think, evident marks of disunion.

'The violent party and the clergy find it their interest to be on good terms. They have each of them from different causes much influence over the great mass of the population, and in consequence of their concurrence and co-operation it has become almost unbounded. I conceive that the Catholic Bishops have committed themselves with the violent party by their recorded objections to the Bill of last session, or in fact to any ecclesiastical arrangement. The inferior clergy are not committed, but I do not discover any symptoms of disunion with O'Connell's party. I have before observed that I consider that party on the decline; if future meetings of the Catholic Board shall prove it as much as the last session has done, the clergy may find it their interest to disavow any connection with them.

'It will be very difficult to destroy the influence which violence and faction command over the lower orders in this country. The most effectual mode which a newspaper or any other publication can adopt to increase its circulation is to depreciate the victories gained by our arms, and to make out a case for the enemy. In the public-houses in Dublin and other large towns a very different impression is found among that class of persons by which they are frequented, whenever foreign intelligence is received, from

that which its arrival creates in England, and there appears a great unwillingness to believe any accounts unfavourable to the enemy. A common observation among them is, that we are killing the Frenchmen with our pens, but they are killing us with their swords. The factious prints do their best to back up this delusion, but they have had, thank God, to labour against the stream lately.

‘I inclose rather an amusing specimen of the efforts of one of the most factious and at the same time popular prints to create an impression in favour of the enemy. The editor of this paper made an overture to the Government some time since, and offered, in return for some advantages which he expected from them, that if granted, his paper should continue equally hostile to the Government and equally seditious, but that “its tone should be less French.”

‘The success of our prosecutions against the editors of seditious publications has had a very good effect. They are attributed very absurdly to the hostility of the Government to the Catholic party at large. We should have been very unwilling to pay so bad a compliment to the Catholic body as to identify them or their cause with such men as Mr. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Magee.’

*Lord Castlemaine to Mr. Peel.*

‘Moydrum Castle, Westmeath : Nov. 1, 1813.

‘The state of the country is growing every day more alarming. The object of the disaffected seems to be now entirely directed to the getting arms, though they are already well provided. There is scarcely a night passes without an attack being made on some house for that purpose, and the blacksmiths are occupied at night *making pikes*. Believe me, when it is too late Government will sorely repent it, if they do not re-enact the Insurrection Bill. Look at the county of Roscommon, where the law is a farce, and no jury can be got to do their duty. At the last assizes, the most horrid murder I think that ever I

read of was so clearly proved that Judge Osborne in addressing the jury said it was unnecessary to make any remark, the business was so clear that they must find the party guilty. They acquitted the prisoners, I believe, without leaving the box. It is of little consequence whether it is the effect of disaffection or fear, the result is equally grievous.'

*Lord Whitworth to Mr. Peel.*

'(Private.)

'Phoenix Park: Nov. 27, 1813.

'You have taken a great load off my mind by not recommending the revival of the Insurrection Act.

'I hope I shall never suffer my love of popularity to supersede the love of good order and of what is right; but I certainly should very much regret marking the outset of my government by such a proceeding, unless called for by irresistible necessity.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'Dec. 1, 1813.—I should have nothing to say to-day, had it not been for the renewed lamentations of that grand alarmist Lord Castlemaine and the magistrates of his neighbourhood. Their apprehensions are wound up to the highest pitch, and they represent this country in such a state as that nothing short of the Insurrection Act, and in all probability not even that, can save it from downright rebellion. Lord Castlemaine with his family, and most of the magistrates, are removing for safety to Athlone.'

*The Archbishop of Cashel to Mr. Peel.*

'Dec. 31, 1813.

'You are doubtless informed of the state of alarm and disturbance in which this part of the country is. The wicked measure which has been adopted of making a public exposure of the names of the persons who signed the Protestant petition last year has given rise to a system of denouncing them as persons whom it is a merit to assassinate. Such

is the state of mind among the lower orders of the people here, that if victims are only pointed out, executioners are to be found in every quarter of the country. I wish I could suggest a remedy as easily as I can state the evil. I know not that even an increase of military, if in the present circumstances it could be spared, would lessen it. It has taken such root in the country that nothing, I believe, but a radical reform of the police, and the most vigorous measures in connection with it, will subdue the spirit. Nor till this is effected can it be hoped that even a more improved system of education, and on a scale to embrace greater numbers, can have an influence on the peace of this district. The present circumstances would justify Government in proposing, and Parliament in giving to the magistrates, stronger powers of coercion. But I much question whether any such would be used to good purpose here.'

In such a state of many parts of the country which, however little as yet he knew of it, he had to govern, and in an anxious time of war with America as well as France, it is abundantly evident that the multifarious and grave responsibilities of the Chief Secretary, and the lessons of experience acquired in the exercise of his powers in all departments of Irish administration, constituted an instructive apprenticeship in the duties which, in later years, were to devolve on him as First Minister, no longer of the Viceroy, but of the Crown.

## CHAPTER V.

1814.

Apprehensions of Peace—Fall of Bonaparte—Effects in Ireland—Catholic Board proclaimed Illegal—Police Act—Insurrection Act—Police Appointments—Judge Fletcher's Charge—Orange Societies—County Patronage—Peerages—Legal Appointments.

HITHERTO Mr. Peel's task of governing Ireland had been rendered more difficult and anxious by war with France and war with America. In 1814 these conditions underwent a change. With spring came the fall of Bonaparte, and in autumn the negotiations which restored peace with the United States.

But earlier in the year the Allies in congress at Châtillon were attempting to come to terms with Napoleon as Emperor, an arrangement regarded by Peel with undisguised aversion, as full of danger for Ireland and for Europe. He writes to Croker: 'I hate these pacific prospects. Surely Robinson must be of the war faction?' and to Sir Charles Flint: 'Let Bonaparte make peace, keep strict faith with the Continental Powers, and turn his attention to Ireland, and he will make us all repent of moderation, and of Mr. Whitbread's applause.'

In this Mr. Peel was at one with the Prince Regent.

*Sir Charles Flint to Mr. Peel.*

'(Private.)

'Irish Office: March 2, 1814.

'The Prince, I hear, is in a very bad humour, and has been so ever since Robinson's arrival. He cannot bear the idea of peace with Bonaparte.

'I suspect the Chancellor [Eldon] has had a very difficult task in making H.R.H. yield to the opinion of the Cabinet. He used to pass three hours at a time with the Prince, and almost every day while Robinson was here.'

The following letters relate to the same subject :

*Lord Whitworth to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Dec. 1813.

‘ I am very happy to find that Lord Castlereagh is gone to the Continent. I think there is great occasion for his presence, and a person better fitted for it could not be found. I am sure you do not doubt his being admirably seconded by Robinson. The fact is that as long as the Allies were running their game in view across Germany, they were all equally eager and bent on the death ; but now that they have got to cold hunting, they begin to relax and divide in opinion. Lord Castlereagh will put them again on the scent, and keep them to it.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘ April 2, 1814.

‘ You will be as glad to hear as I am to tell you that we are at length relieved from the dangers and horrors of peace. The negotiations were broken off on the 18th ult., and Bonaparte was defeated at Arcis-sur-Aube on the 21st. On the 22nd the Allies moved in pursuit.’

‘ April 7.—One chief ground of the satisfaction I derive from the entrance of the Allies into Paris is the disappointment and the just punishment which it inflicts on the Crown Prince [of Sweden]. I am afraid that consummate hypocrite has completely deceived us. No evil, and in the former part of the campaign much good, resulted from his co-operation, but I strongly suspect that his conduct has been solely influenced by views of his own personal aggrandisement, and that there have been moments when he has contemplated the possibility of exchanging the crown of Sweden for that of France. Perhaps I give him too much credit for his moderation, and should say “ unite ” instead of “ exchange.”

‘ It is supposed “ among the well-informed circles ” (as the “ Morning Post ” says) that we have been doing great



injustice to Austria, and that she was always well inclined to press the downfall of Bonaparte and the restoration of the Bourbons. It is said that Alexander was equally anxious for the *bouleversement* of the present dynasty, but that he was actually disposed to promote the views of Bernadotte. I assure you that I have heard this asserted on very good authority; it was told me in confidence, which I do not betray in repeating it to you. Others again assert that Alexander had indeed no particular wish for the Bourbons, but had a great inclination to get a character for magnanimity, that his object was to set aside Bonaparte, to enter Paris, and leave the choice of Bonaparte's successor to the unbiassed choice of the French people. I dare say now that he is in Paris he will feel a growing inclination to assist, in which perhaps his royal colleagues will share, and that they will request the French people to elect a sovereign with all that kind consideration and gratuitous advice which the dean and chapter of an episcopal see receive when they are desired to elect a bishop. However, there can be little doubt that the Bourbons have the best chance.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Norbury.*

'April 14, 1814.

'On all the events which have recently taken place on the Continent, I most heartily congratulate you. You, and all persons who, like you, have, from the commencement of that tornado which has disturbed the peace of Europe for the last twenty-four years, taken for your political motto, "Stare super vias antiquas," and have looked for our salvation in a steady defiance of French threats and French power. have a right to rejoice in the consummation of all your wishes. It ought to be a lasting lesson to younger politicians.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'Irish Office: April 15, 1814.

'I happened to be at the Foreign Office a few minutes since, when the deputy from Paris, Périgord, a brother of

Talleyrand, arrived, and I have come back to send you all the scraps of intelligence I could collect. The deputy is unfortunately the deafest man I ever saw ; he has, however, the full faculties of speech. He left Paris on the 13th inst. Bonaparte quitted Fontainebleau on Tuesday, the 12th, escorted by 2,000 Cossacks under General Count Orloff, who were to accompany him to Elba. Monsieur<sup>1</sup> made his triumphant entry into Paris on Tuesday. The Emperor of Russia had ordered a file of 40,000 troops and 400 guns to receive him. Nothing was known of Lord Wellington since March 20. The adhesions of Lyons and Bordeaux were expected daily.

‘Périgord said little or nothing about the politics of Paris. He said that Marmont had behaved very nobly, had saved Paris, and that his conduct was spoken of in the highest terms. The officer in command of the artillery had received distinct written orders from Bonaparte to blow up all the powder magazines the moment the Allies set a foot in Paris. He tore and trampled upon these infamous instructions, and the Emperor of Russia gave him the cross of some Russian order set in diamonds as a reward for his good conduct.

‘Périgord says that the Emperor of Russia seems inclined to give Bonaparte very little liberty or power of doing mischief. I hear from others that Alexander declares he will not take Bonaparte’s life, but that he should not be very sorry to hear of his death. If this declaration be generally known, I should not wish to put his life in a lease.

‘The King of France and his party at Hartwell are not in great spirits, I hear. They think, and with justice, that the authorities in Paris have tied up the monarchy too much in their new constitution. The Provisional Government have drawn up their proceedings in a crude and undigested manner. In some places, they call Louis by the hereditary title which he claims, Louis XVIII. If he be Louis Dix-huit, and be admitted by that name, why elect him to the sovereignty of the French nation, why not recall him as

<sup>1</sup> The King’s brother, the Comte d’Artois, afterwards Charles X.

King *de jure*? But what I object to principally is, their conduct in granting all the immunities and indulgences to the French nation before the arrival of the legitimate Sovereign. Surely it would have been politic and just to have allowed him to grace the resumption of his authority by a voluntary surrender of any odious privilege.'

While these great events were passing on the Continent, there flowed in on Mr. Peel from various quarters fresh evidence of the necessity for an improved police in Ireland. In January, the Bishop of Clonfert reports an attack upon the town of Banagher by the people of Luskagh, 'a district notorious for disaffection to Government, and general wickedness.' The troops being called out, sixteen of the aggressors were wounded, four of whom died. The Bishop goes on to describe acts of violence done to civil officers engaged in serving writs.

'One process was served on Mr. Daly's cookmaid, who, as soon as she discovered what it was, threw it into the officer's face, knocked him down, and secured the door of her master's house. In a short time the poor fellow found that he was a marked man, and endeavoured to escape from the town; but he was overtaken a few yards out of it, and beaten most dreadfully, all his papers were taken out of his pockets, and he was thrown into a mill-pond. It is known who the men were that committed this outrage, and that they brought the papers taken out of the officer's pocket to Mr. Daly, and yet, as far as I can discover, no prosecution is to take place. I speak on authority, as my son as a magistrate took the examinations.

'Now, my good sir, suffer me to ask you in confidence (and in strict confidence I write the whole of this letter), if neither the court out of which such a process issued, nor the plaintiff in the case, nor the beaten officer, nor anyone whatever, will take cognisance of such an outrage, or of the perpetrators of it, can we be surprised at the want of general currency of the law in this land? It is curious how impunity in such outrages descends, and encourages the repetition of them among their posterity. It is a badge of honour hang-

ing now on the parish of Lusmagh that years ago they rose, to the number of a thousand, and beat two troops of the Green Horse out of the district. Many feats also are recorded of their unpunished heroism during the late rebellion, where to a man almost they bore pikes, but they were protected by a certain great man among them.

‘And speaking lately of the outrage at Eyrecourt to some farmers and even gentlemen of the neighbourhood, I was answered, that it has ever been a point of honour in the people of Eyrecourt not to suffer a civil process to be executed on anyone by a stranger, and that it is well remembered that a man came from Dublin to serve one upon Colonel Eyre’s father, when the people put him into a bog, and smothered him.’

In a second letter the Bishop adds :

‘I cannot but be sensible that nothing but the necessity of the State at the present moment can have left the police so destitute of military aid. The want of it is always the signal for new insubordination. And under the present system of government Ireland cannot exist without copious military. With it, it has long been my opinion that, now the Parliament is defunct, Ireland is a country more easily to be regulated (because the inhabitants are more acute and more submissive, and more cheerful under irresistible restraint) than England.’

As to the employment of soldiers as police, letters were exchanged between the Home Secretary and the Irish Government :

*Lord Sidmouth to Mr. Peel.*

‘(Private.)

‘Richmond Park : Jan. 19, 1814.

I have been particularly charged by those members of the Government who attended the Cabinet, to express their earnest hope that the measure of dividing the army, or a large portion of it, into small detachments for the purposes of police, will never be resorted to, except under the pressure

of an indisputable and urgent necessity; as it has the effect not only of injuring most materially the discipline of the troops, but of teaching the inhabitants to trust entirely to military aid, instead of placing their chief reliance on the vigilance and activity of the magistrates, and on their own prudence and exertion for protection and security.

‘It was stated by one of the Cabinet that such a distribution of the military force was particularly discountenanced by Lord Wellington when he held an official situation in Ireland.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Sidmouth.*

‘Jan. 28, 1814.

‘With regard to dispersing troops for the purpose of police, I am most fully disposed to admit the serious objections in a military point of view to the measures to which we are sometimes compelled to resort. They ought only to be resorted to and can only be justified on the ground of necessity. Generally speaking, if the general officer in command of the district objects to the application of the civil power for military aid, we feel little disposed to press for compliance with it.

‘Sir E. Littlehales was in office with Lord Wellington, and I have not been able to ascertain that (considering the difference of circumstances at the two periods) more precautions were adopted to prevent the unnecessary dispersion of the military force at that time than at present.’

During the same months the Irish Government found their position much improved in regard to ‘the Catholic question.’ The violent and extravagant behaviour (as it was then deemed) of O’Connell and his associate Scully played directly into Mr. Peel’s hands. Failing as yet to stir the Catholic masses to effective action, the agitators succeeded in alienating not only large numbers of Protestants in England and Ireland who had been inclining to concession, and Protestant leaders on that side, such as Ponsonby and Grattan, but even the moderate and respectable members of the late Catholic Committee, such as Lord Fingall. Mr. Peel’s policy, it will be seen, was to divide his opponents, to disgust the Catholic press with the shabbiness of the orators in

allowing editors to go to prison for them, and instead of taking prompt action against the Catholic Board, to give it rope enough to hang itself.

*Mr. Peel to the Speaker (Abbot).*

Feb. 13, 1814.

‘The immense additions which have been made to the number of those who are adverse to concession to the Catholics, I attribute to the violence and absurdity of the Catholic Board.

‘I feel the full force of all the objections made to a connivance at the proceedings of that faction, though I see little danger in them. But when I see them productive of nothing but disunion among the disaffected, and disgust and union among the loyal, I can reconcile myself to their existence.

‘The Catholic Board, of which such pompous descriptions are given in the public papers, consists of about twenty persons. With two or perhaps three exceptions, the body is contemptible.

‘All the influence they have is through the press, and all the injury they can do is by the infamous and inflammatory libels put forth in their speeches. While, therefore, the Board has been spared from direct attack, it has been attacked, and in my opinion most successfully, through the press.

‘The “Evening Post” has been the firmest and indeed the only firm supporter of the Board. Its circulation is very extensive, and the mischief precisely proportionate. The proprietor was sentenced a few months since to two years’ imprisonment and a fine of 500*l.* for a libel on the Duke of Richmond, and yesterday to a further six months and a fine of 1,000*l.* for publishing certain resolutions of a meeting in Kilkenny. Of this meeting Major Bryan was the chairman, and of the resolutions Mr. Scully was the author. We foresaw that by the prosecution of Magee we should either compel them to avow themselves, or we should commit them with the press. They chose the latter alter-

native. As the Solicitor-General observed, they entered into partnership with Magee, but left the gaol part of the concern exclusively to him.

‘The consequence you may see in the “Evening Post” of the 10th under the head of “Kilkenny Resolutions.” I hope that Magee will prove a true prophet, and that the Board, after having done incalculable mischief to the cause of which it is a professed friend, “will go out of itself like the light of a lamp, will be deserted even by the Catholics, to whom the speechifyings and the resolutions will become a nuisance, and instead of being honourably crushed by a Crown prosecution will die in a ditch without public sympathy or public regret.” This its natural death would be infinitely preferable to a more violent and less dishonourable one.

‘I doubt much whether the Catholic question will be brought forward at all in the ensuing session. Two of its warmest advocates have declared that it would be treason to the cause to urge a discussion of it in the present state of public opinion.’

In the endeavour to detach moderate Catholics from the extreme faction, a private agent on whom Mr. Peel relied was Mr. Michael Burke, a Protestant gentleman, who had means of influencing the views of Lord Fingall. Mr. Burke was under obligations to the Chief Secretary, which he gratefully acknowledges, and does his best to requite by frequent communications.

*Mr. Michael Burke to Mr. Peel.*

‘Galway: March 19, 1814.

‘I can give you a satisfactory account of Roman Catholic affairs in this county. I have conversed with some of the most respectable and intelligent of the body here, all disapproving as much as possible of the proceedings of the Catholic Board. One of the most intelligent told me he had not thought it possible that any body of Catholics could become so unpopular among the Catholic gentry as the Board are. The Catholic clergy decline calling on their flocks for the subscriptions

laid on by the Board; they say they find sufficient difficulty in obtaining their own small contributions, and will not ask for other purposes.'

'April 2.—I beg leave to trouble you on a subject success in which would give much more satisfaction in general than what is called Catholic Emancipation.

'What I mean to suggest to you is a revision of the Corn Laws, for the purpose of encouraging and protecting the agriculture of Ireland. In my early days landlords found so much more satisfaction in dealing with graziers than with the middling or lower orders, that the lands of the country in general were let to such tenants. These let the borders of the bogs and the mountains on their farms to the lower orders at an exorbitant rent, and held the best part under stock. The encouragement afforded by the high price of corn enabled the lower orders to pay such rents as the grazier could not afford; and many of them have built comfortable houses. If corn should continue below such a price as would enable such tenants to pay their rent, the consequence will be that the country will fall back to the former state. It may be said landlords should reduce their rents, but I apprehend they would be more likely to dispossess their resident tenantry, and deal, as heretofore, with persons who would not depend on the rise of corn to pay their rents. The injurious consequences to the wealth and power of the country would be incalculable. In general, at the time of the Rebellion, such as had comfortable habitations and could pay their rents well were disinclined to the French, and considered their situation would not be improved by their success; while those whose situation could not be worse were in hopes of a change for the better. Property is the last hold we have on the attachment of the middling and lower orders.

'The Catholic gentry here possess about one-third of the fee simple property, and ten to one of the freehold and personal property of the county. The well-disposed among them are anxious for the success of the Bourbons, the Board found their hopes on Bonaparte. The violent



among them are clamorous for peace with him, in order that he may be established on the throne, and able soon after to assist them in their views of effecting a separation. But I hope Bonaparte and the Board will fall together, never to rise again, and then we may look forward to quiet and peace.

‘You engaged in the administration here at a very critical period; and I trust the firmness and moderation of your conduct will be attended with complete success. The kindness in the arrangement completed for me made an impression on me which cannot be effaced by time.’

‘*April 18.*—I cannot forbear congratulating you on the fall of Bonaparte. My satisfaction on that event has been increased by the opinion which I expressed to you some time back, that peace with him would not tend to preserve the peace of this country. On the contrary, it is my decided opinion that within two years after such a peace we should have a rebellion in this country. The conduct of some persons who I consider were attached to him, confirmed me in this opinion. I judged by their exultation on his entrance into Moscow, and their clamorous wishes expressed for peace when his situation became unprosperous: the more he became embarrassed the louder was their cry. A man who lives within a few miles of this place (and who was known to be attached to Bonaparte, and called one of his sons after him) lately asked a friend of mine whether it was really true that he had abdicated, for that he did not believe a word in the Government papers, or that was placarded on the mail coach. On being assured of the fact, he said, “Then am I without any hope.”

‘There is another matter to which I beg leave to call your attention. It is, that when the Catholic Board shall be completely put down, Government may take an early opportunity to bring forward such measures of relief for the Catholics as they all may agree may be conceded with safety to our religion and Establishment. The violent party having always endeavoured to impress on the Catholics that they never could expect concessions except when the country

was in difficulty, any concession in quiet times would have the best effect.'

The leader of the House of Commons (Lord Castlereagh) being busy at Châtillon, Parliament met later than usual, giving Mr. Peel ample time to arrange his projects for legislation. Among these, with a view to suppressing the Catholic Board, he was prepared to bring in a Bill to strengthen the Convention Act passed by the Irish Parliament in 1793, but while the Congress lasted he could not persuade Ministers to come to any decision on that subject.

Mr. Plunket meanwhile deprecated any such measure 'in the strongest terms and with much asperity,' declaring in private that the existing law was strong enough, and even blaming the Government for not having used it. Early in May, Lord Liverpool and Lord Sidmouth finally refused to sanction an application to Parliament for any extension, or even any declaration, of the law, but undertook to support the Irish Government in such proceedings under the existing Act as they might deem expedient. 'I could perceive,' Mr. Peel writes, 'that Lord Liverpool's opinion inclined towards forbearance, but he agreed upon the whole with Lord Sidmouth that local information and experience must decide.' Among the Irish members 'there was one unanimous and decided expression of opinion against the expediency of further forbearance.' Lord Whitworth showing some wish to defer to the Prime Minister's opinion, Mr. Peel explains that Lord Liverpool had 'expressed it as an individual, and not as head of the Government,' and adds, 'As the shortest way of removing any uneasiness from your mind, I have no hesitation in saying that, if I were wholly responsible for the Irish Government, I should conceive myself justified and safe in adopting that line of conduct with regard to the Catholic Board which appeared to me most expedient.' Upon this the Irish law officers were consulted, and prepared a proclamation, which after being, by Mr. Peel's advice, revised, simplified, and shortened, was well received by Parliament and by the country.

*Lord Whitworth to Mr. Peel.*

'(Private.)

'Dublin Castle: 6 P.M. May 10, 1814.

'My dear Peel,—We have this moment broken up our conference, that is, the Chancellor, the Attorney and the Solicitor General, and Gregory. We have, after about three

hours' consultation and twice as many changes in the opinion of the Chancellor, come to a resolution conformable to your views and my wishes—to act against the Catholic Board. I need not say that the Chancellor was wavering, the Attorney steady and firm, and Bushe at first not much inclined to meddle with them. I expressed what were my feelings, submitting them, however, most completely to their reason and better judgment. Gregory and Bushe seem inclined to think the Board will sink quietly into its ditch. I am not of that opinion. They will continue their meetings, be it only to talk nonsense. I cannot admit the mischief which our friends impute to them, but I think it would be indecorous to connive at their existence.

'Your letter, which I read, was very much approved of by all.

'Most affectionately yours,

'WHITWORTH.'

'*May 11.*—You can have no idea of the vacillations of the Chancellor. He was all doubt and apprehension.

'The Solicitor-General was decidedly for further forbearance, and if it had not been for the firmness and vigour of the Attorney-General we should have separated without coming to any conclusion at all. My feelings were entirely in favour of that which was adopted, but feelings on such occasions are but dangerous counsellors. I think we are much indebted to Saurin, and I feel confident that he will carry us through.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'Irish Office: June 8, 1814.

'The Proclamation of Peace will not give me one tithe of the satisfaction which the proclamation of war that accompanied your letter has given me.

'Our past policy has been to forbear. By the very issue of the proclamation, we have shown a disposition to avoid any harsh or abrupt proceeding, and in the terms and reasoning of it a desire to conciliate. Nothing more on the side of forbearance can be expected from us, and if, "in

defiance of this our Proclamation," the Board shall again presume to violate the law, those who violate it should be treated with no more respect or ceremony than any other disturbers of the public peace.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'London : June 8, 1814.

'The proclamation arrived by the express yesterday, and I must say that I never saw a document in print which gave me so much satisfaction.

'I consider that the issue of it is quite a new era—to use a fashionable phrase—in the policy of the Government. While we acted on the forbearing system it was perfectly wise, I think, to forbear thoroughly ; and when we adopt the interfering system, for the very same reason it will, I think, be equally wise to interfere effectually. Nothing can exceed the detestation in which the Board and its principles are held in this country.'

'June 9.—You will be little less anxious to hear of the impression produced by our proclamation in this country, than I am to ascertain its effects in Ireland.

'Nothing can be more satisfactory than the manner in which it has been received here. Sir John Hippisley moved for its production, and merely said that he gave the Irish Government the greatest credit for its temper and firmness. Ponsonby, Newport, Parnell, and Grattan were in the House, and not a word fell from them in favour of the Board, not a comment upon the proclamation. As Fitzgerald was leaving the House, Grattan said to him, "I have seen the proclamation, and I approve of it. I approve of the tone and temper of it, and think that the Government have spoken to the people as they ought to do. I have had a communication from the Board, but I shall hold no future correspondence with a body that the Government of Ireland declares to be an illegal one."

'Parnell said to me that he thought we had subdued the Board before, by committing it with the press. He said it had lost all its influence since the "Evening Post"

deserted it, and added, "I am only afraid you will restore its authority by a direct attack upon it." He spoke of the Board with great contempt, and his only fear was that it would partly revive.

'Newport said, "I have seen your proclamation." I replied, "I hope you approve of it." "I wish it had appeared sooner; I think the Board have done a great deal of mischief," was his answer. I asked him whether he did not think they had done a great deal of good also. He said, "What good have they done?" I told him that "if they had opened his eyes and the eyes of his friends, and if, instead of defending the Board as they had done the Convention, they would show the people of Ireland that a factious assembly had no support in Parliament, they would do more for Ireland than all the motions they could make or all the inquiries they could institute."

'So much for the opinions of our adversaries; as for our friends, they are delighted at our interference. What gives me the greatest satisfaction is the little disposition shown to question the policy of our past forbearance. All that we have now to do is to follow up with effect our own declaration.'

The proclamation, so far as there was any need for it, achieved its purpose. The Board, henceforth kept feebly alive only by the exertions of O'Connell and some priests, sank into insignificance, and ere long ceased to exist. Neither as a Committee, nor as a Board, hardly even as a Club, did the Catholics venture to take further common action, until nine years later O'Connell organised the Catholic Association.

No sooner was the Board off his hands in Parliament, than Mr. Peel turned his mind to arming the Irish Government with fresh powers of police. The two letters immediately following contain a first rough sketch of his proposals. The further correspondence shows how careful he was to consult his colleagues, and yet how much responsibility devolved on him.

*Mr. Peel to Sir Edward Crofton.*

'Feb. 28, 1814.

'I am much obliged to you for your suggestions in respect to the defective state of the county police. I despair of

rendering the present system efficient, and I have it in contemplation to introduce some measure into Parliament for its reform. I am satisfied that one of the main causes of its inefficiency is the inadequate compensation granted by law to those who are appointed to the office of constable. I have not yet been able to arrange the details of any future plan, indeed I can hardly say that I have determined upon its principle; but from the satisfaction which I should have in ascertaining your opinion upon the subject, I cannot hesitate to communicate to you in confidence the general outline of the measure which has suggested itself to me.

‘I should propose to give the Lord Lieutenant the power of proclaiming any district to be in a state of disturbance, and to authorise him, on the recommendation of a certain number of magistrates of it, to appoint any number of special constables; and in order to induce a better description of persons to take the office, I think a salary of not less than 80*l.* a year should be attached to the appointment, their powers as constables to extend to the disturbed districts, and those powers to cease when the Lord Lieutenant proclaimed the restoration of tranquillity. In order to give the inhabitants of the district a direct and personal interest in the suppression of disturbances, I should propose that the expense incurred by the pay and equipment of these constables should be levied from them. In addition to this, it is worthy of consideration, whether it may not be proper to give the Lord Lieutenant the power also of appointing a special magistrate in the disturbed district.

‘This measure must be attended with some amendment of the present system calculated for ordinary occurrences.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Desart.*

‘Feb. 24, 1814.’

‘We have a right to call on county gentlemen for the performance of the ordinary duties of a magistrate, but in the event of a commotion and a general disposition to acts of outrage, we can scarcely expect from them, at least we

can only find in very rare instances, that degree of activity and vigilance which is necessary for their suppression.

‘It may be asked, for instance, in Kilkenny, would it not afford reasonable ground of offence to the active magistrates of that county to have a stipendiary and possibly a stranger put over their heads? It would, and I think the appointment ought not to be made in such a county or where such a disposition exists. But I could name other counties—Waterford, for instance—where I should wish to put the magistracy to shame, and to make them contribute to the expense of their own disgrace by paying the man who performed their duty.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘June 11, 1814.

‘I have given notice of a motion in very general terms respecting the preservation of the peace in Ireland, so that I may propose anything I please. The accounts you have sent me from Kildare and the Queen’s County rather embarrass me. I am decidedly of opinion that we ought to have a very strong law. Shall that law be the revived Insurrection Act, or the Police Act as I have it now prepared? I should say, that which will be most effectual. But the truth is, there are provisions in both which it would be very desirable to have, and the matter to determine is how to obtain them.

‘I wish I were in Ireland to talk over the matter fully with the Lord Lieutenant and Attorney and yourself. I will sum up shortly my opinions.

‘I think the Police Act hardly strong enough. I think the Insurrection Act very strong, but it has a sort of strength which is not precisely that which we require. The Police Act would be more effectual, though infinitely more moderate in its provisions. I think the Police Act should be the permanent law of the land, but I should like to have for the next three years some additional powers in the proclaimed districts beyond those which it gives. If I could include these permanent and temporary provisions in the same

Act, under the modest title of "An Act for the Preservation of the Peace in certain districts," I should get what I believe would be much more effectual than the old Insurrection Act.

'I wish you would hold a conference with the Lord Lieutenant and the Attorney-General on this suggestion of mine. It must be an immediate one, and I cannot give you much time to deliberate.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'June 24, 1814.

'I last night moved for leave to bring in a Bill enabling the Lord Lieutenant to proclaim disturbed districts, to appoint a chief magistrate in them with a salary, and special constables. Nothing could be more satisfactory than the course of the debate. I declared my intention of proposing it to be a permanent law of Ireland, which is a very great object, and no objection was made to the principle of the measure, or to the permanence of its operation. I expressly reserved to myself the full power of proposing the re-enactment in the present session of the Insurrection Act, if the urgency of the case required it, but I thought it politic to avoid mixing the discussion of the two measures, as it was a great object to get the full assent of the House to the principle of my permanent law.

'The real truth is, that by proposing this measure first, and getting so unanimous a concurrence in it, I conceive the temporary re-enactment of the Insurrection Act will be much facilitated, should it be necessary. If I had proposed the renewal of that Act in the first instance, I should have found it very difficult to procure a permanent law. Our opponents would have told us to wait till the end of the three years, or for whatever period the Insurrection Act was renewed, and then to propose a permanent law if deemed requisite. But now I am confident there will be less difficulty in the next session, or even in this, in re-enacting the Insurrection Law in addition to our Police Act, than we should have had in re-enacting it singly.'



*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘ June 24, 1814.

‘ I said the Bill was not meant to meet any temporary emergency, but was rendered necessary by the past state of Ireland for the last fifty years and by the probable state of it for the next five hundred.

‘ As I wished to give as accurate a view as I could of the state of the disturbed districts, I exhausted most of the information you have lately sent me, and that, together with an episode detailing the murder of poor Connell and a description of carding, appeared to produce a due effect upon the minds of English country gentlemen, though I fear it will not encourage them to settle with their families in Ireland.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘ July 2, 1814.

‘ Nothing can be more satisfactory than the progress of the Police Bill. It passed through the second reading last night without opposition, even without comment except from that blockhead Sir F. Flood, who cannot say anything in opposition to a measure without in fact supporting it, as he cannot be the advocate of one without proving its enemy. He is too ludicrous to be worth answering.

‘ I think with a strong military force and our new Police Bill, we might go on during the long days just as well without the Insurrection Act as with it. But if Parliament is not to meet again till January or February next, and if in the mean time the militia is to be disembodied, I would willingly encounter some opposition to procure the revival of the Insurrection Act for three years. It can do no harm to have the power, though I firmly believe it would lie dormant, and if there should be “ a dispute in Thomas Street,” as Emmett’s rebellion is called, we might reproach ourselves hereafter for not being better provided for the emergency. But the Police Bill will be much more effectual. The Insurrection Act is only calculated for a period of open

insurrection, the Police Bill for ordinary disturbances, for the every-day state of Ireland.

‘It will not be an easy matter to make any immediate arrangement for Mr. Webber. I must have underrated him exceedingly if he is at all fit to contend with Plunket, and I think his friends would insure his complete and unqualified failure if they gave it out that he was brought into Parliament with that view. I will not say whether the impression is justified or not, but I think there is no man who has left a deeper impression on the House of Commons in favour of his abilities as a speaker than Plunket. If Plunket chose to give us a peevish opposition, it would be almost impossible to conduct the Irish business in the House without the assistance of an able lawyer and one who had practised at the Irish bar. But as matters now stand, and in the present state and with the present prospects of the Catholic question, we do not need a lawyer, or a powerful Protestant advocate.’

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. Littlehales.*

‘July 6, 1814.

‘Your friends may be right in thinking the Police Bill not strong enough to meet the existing emergency, but perhaps some eight or ten years hence they will thank me for not merely providing for the control of the present disturbances, but for bringing in a law that is intended for permanent operation, and to remain on the statute-book, I trust, *in sæcula sæculorum.*’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘July 7, 1814.

‘I have had an interview with Lord Liverpool and Lord Sidmouth and Lord Castlereagh on the state of Ireland.

‘The first question I asked was, whether there was reason to believe that Parliament would meet in November. I was told that there was every probability that it would not, and that, as Lord Castlereagh would be absent at the

Congress, its meeting would be most inconvenient. I observed that in that case I was decidedly of opinion that the Irish Government should be prepared for a possible emergency by the extension of their powers. I did not wish to overstate the danger, but it is impossible to conceal from ourselves the probability that there may be some partial rising, which, however contemptible in a political point of view, may, unless effectually and speedily controlled, spread into something more formidable, and be the cause at least of the greatest individual injury and local calamity. I therefore pressed most strongly for the renewal of the Insurrection Act.

‘The name sounds formidable enough, but what are the provisions and the powers of it? On the requisition of seven magistrates of a county, or the majority of them, summoned at an extraordinary sessions, stating the district to be in a state of disturbance, the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council may proclaim it, and enjoin the inhabitants to remain within their houses at night, unless they have good cause for being absent. What is there unreasonable in this in the present state of Ireland? Supposing it an evil, compare it with that for which it is intended as a remedy, with the cardings and burnings and murders, which are committed by men who leave their homes at nights, and who escape detection because you cannot make them at present account for their absence. I had better, however, reserve my arguments for to-morrow.

‘To revert to our conference. Lord Liverpool was strongly inclined to do nothing. Lord Castlereagh thought we had quite ground enough in the papers for the Insurrection Act, or almost any other Act, but wished we should “fight it out,” because it would have a bad effect upon the negotiations to create an impression that Ireland is in a state of great agitation and disturbance. Lord Sidmouth was with me as to the necessity of increased powers. They asked me what course I wished to pursue; I said, I thought the course infinitely the least embarrassing to me, and the best on every account, was to appoint a secret committee, who

might read the recent communications from Ireland, and make a report of five lines recommending the renewal of strong measures, at least of the power of resorting to them. This course would have made it necessary to have had a message from the Crown, and the papers sealed up communicated to the House, as was done in 1812 in the case of the Luddites.<sup>2</sup> At the conference no decision was come to.

‘Lord Sidmouth sent for me yesterday and told me that he had been urging very strongly upon Lord Liverpool and Lord Castlereagh the necessity of increasing our powers, and that he had succeeded in getting their consent to the revival of the Insurrection Act, but not to the appointment of a secret committee, which, though the best course on all other accounts, should be avoided in this case, because a message from the Crown would give an importance to the proceedings which might have a bad effect at the meeting of the Congress. He told me, therefore, that I was at liberty to make the attempt to get the Insurrection Act on my own statement of its necessity, and on making as good a case as I could out of individual instances of outrage and atrocity, avoiding as far as possible reference to general disaffection.

‘This is very embarrassing, I think, to me. I have not a shadow of doubt that I could have procured a unanimous opinion from an impartial committee. However, after some deliberation, though I had not much time for it, I determined to go down to the House and give notice for tomorrow of my intention to move for the renewal of such parts of the Insurrection Act of 1807 as are not now in force, for two years. I hope you will fully approve of this my determination.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘July 12, 1814.

‘By your account it seems that Mills has mismanaged matters in Kildare most shamefully. It is very fortunate that I did not appoint a secret committee before I brought in the Insurrection Act, as I intended mainly to rely on the

<sup>2</sup> Rioters in England, who destroyed machines.

Kildare conspiracy. Supposing that to have been a fabrication from beginning to end, which I still agree with you it cannot possibly be, I had abundance of other ground no doubt to show the necessity of a strong law; but not knowing the weakness of that, I should have mainly relied on it, taking it as a specimen, and might hereafter have been somewhat embarrassed by the conflicting testimony of Mills and the soldiers.

‘The Right Hon. W. Bagwell, in a private conference with me, protested against the introduction of the Insurrection Act, assured me that Tipperary was the Arcadia of modern times, and was absent from the House when I moved the renewal of the Act. I was very sorry for it, and hoped he would have risen in his place and have pledged himself for Tipperary, for on that very morning I had a letter from his father which I intended to read had it been necessary, full of alarm and disturbance, and recommending a friend to be a police magistrate. Here is a fine specimen of the different effects of county politics.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘July 13, 1814.

‘I am very glad you so fully approve of my determination to apply for the Insurrection Act. I think the Government here, I mean principally Lord Liverpool and Lord Castlereagh, who were certainly adverse to it, begin to think we were in the right. Lord Castlereagh put it to me, to state whether the Irish Government thought the Insurrection Act necessary for the preservation of the peace of Ireland, and whether by abstaining from any attempt to revive it we should give offence to our friends in and out of Parliament. I answered in the affirmative without hesitation. Lord Liverpool was decidedly against the attempt to revive it, but, as I said to Lord Sidmouth, Lord Liverpool is much too pacific a minister for Ireland, and, if we had taken his advice, we should have had the Catholic Board in full force at this moment. Lord Liverpool said it was very inconvenient to have violent debates and angry dis-

cussions at so late a period of the year. No doubt it is. But I ventured to predict that there would be no angry debates, and if there were, it is much better to have a conflict in Parliament than a massacre in Ireland.

'July 14.—The second reading of the Insurrection Act went off well enough. Mr. Horner and Sir Samuel Romilly and a host of enlightened and philosophic Scotch lawyers think it very shocking to suspend, if necessary, trial by jury; but the Irish representatives (with one single exception, Sir H. Parnell) seem to be of a different opinion. I inclose a note which I have received from Sir John Newport, who is out of town. I hardly expected a written though a qualified declaration of his approval.'

*Mr. Peel to Sir John Newport.*

'July 14, 1814.

'As for the Insurrection Act, I regret as much as anyone the necessity for its revival. There may be a difference of opinion upon some of its provisions, but there seems in Ireland but one opinion upon the absolute necessity of this or some similar measure of equal efficiency. I yesterday received a memorial from Tipperary, begging earnestly that the district in which Mr. Long was recently murdered might be forthwith proclaimed. I consider the Act less as a measure originating with the Executive Government than as one called for by the people, at least by the well-disposed, for the protection of themselves and families.

'I think your suggestion in regard to the employment of the better description of militia soldiers in the preservation of the peace is well worthy serious consideration. I cannot give a better proof of it than by a communication which I have made to Sir George Hewett, requesting that he will recommend a number of militia, non-commissioned officers and soldiers, from whom we may select the special constables to be appointed under the permanent Police Act. The efficacy of that and of every measure for preserving the public peace depends, I am thoroughly convinced, upon its rescue from any connections with electioneering and local interests,

and I hope we shall act upon that principle, and prove in one instance at least that the Government of Ireland is not that *magnum latrocinium* which Mr. Burke declared it to be.

‘The session being far advanced, I must postpone any measure for the purification of that Augean stable, the ordinary Grand Jury Police of Ireland.’

Letter after letter about this date shows Mr. Peel’s firm resolve that the efficiency of his new police should not be sacrificed to the system of political patronage, which wrought such mischief in other departments of the public service.

*Mr. Peel to Sir Edward Crofton.*

‘July 3, 1814.’

‘I have great satisfaction in learning that the principle of my new Police Bill meets with your approbation. I entirely concur with you that in the appointment of the chief magistrate and special constables all considerations of parliamentary or local interests should be overlooked, and I believe that, the less previous connection they have had with the country in which they are employed, the more effectual will their exertions be. I hope we shall be enabled to adhere faithfully to this principle.’

*Mr. Peel to the Attorney-General.*

‘July 5, 1814.’

‘I propose to give the chief magistrate 700*l.* a year. I am afraid it is too late to increase the salaries of the constables. The best will probably be found among disbanded sergeants and veteran soldiers, and as the pay will exceed the pay of soldiers I should hope it will be sufficient. However, I will make some increase if I can. The better the description of constable, the more effectual will be the Bill.’

‘If the present or any other Government make a job of it, they will most grossly betray the confidence which Parliament has placed in them, and shamefully sacrifice the best interests of the country to the worst. You cannot

conceive how I am bored by applications for the office of chief magistrate. Of course Wilcox and Wills will have the first claim.'

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. Littlehales.*

'July 6, 1814.

'I have no doubt that some of the brigade majors will make good police magistrates, and I am sure we shall be very glad if Sir G. Hewett will recommend us good constables from the military. We ought to be crucified if we make the measure a job, and select our constables from the servants of our parliamentary friends.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'July 22, 1814.

'I receive at least ten letters a day applying for the office of chief magistrate, to which I invariably return the same discouraging answer. The number of applications and the sort of applicants are quite ludicrous.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

'Aug. 8, 1814.

'In answer to your letter expressing an earnest wish for the appointment of — to the situation of superintending magistrate, I beg to remind you that a county must be proclaimed before any nomination to that office can take place. I am sure you will agree with me that those who have been employed by the Government for many years in maintaining the peace of the country will have the best claim for an appointment of this nature.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Wilcox.*

'Sept. 16, 1814.

'I hope your appointment as chief magistrate, and the manner in which every individual from the highest to the lowest, who will be employed under the Police Act, has been selected, will prove with how little truth the Irish Government has been charged with a desire to make the unfortunate disturbances of the country a source of patronage.'



This unjust accusation was made by an Irish judge on circuit, who, with much courage and insight but with less judicial fairness, delivered to the Grand Jury of Wexford, in which county he had not been for twelve years past, a political address, denying the existence of conspiracy or treason, tracing the prevalence of crime to rack-rents, to paper currency, to tithes, to Orange associations, to magistrates over-zealous or supine, and to grand juries who connived at jobs; finally satirising the new Police Acts as a provision of offices for so-called loyalists, and recommending 'other means of tranquillising Ireland than those hitherto resorted to, banishment, the rope, and the gibbet.' Having delivered this charge with startling effect, the judge went on to print it for general distribution, revising the most unseemly passages,<sup>3</sup> of which, however, a sample remains.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Desart.*

Sept. 22, 1814.

'Judge Fletcher's printed charge is a very inoffensive document compared with the charge which he really delivered, and of which I have an authentic copy. He is a shabby fellow for publishing a mutilated statement. One part of the real charge runs as follows :

"There is first an office of 700*l.* a year, a very good office for a *loyal* man, gentlemen, for a first-rate loyal man. There are three offices of 150*l.* for second-rate loyalists, and abundance of offices of 50*l.* a year for inferior loyalists. Oh most excellent Peace Preservation Bills, Oh! Mr. Peel, Mr. Peel, Oh!"'

To Lord Sidmouth, Mr. Peel reports a general opinion that 'it was a gross violation of the duty of a judge to animadvert, in the manner and language used by Judge Fletcher, upon Acts of the Legislature,' and suggests that as some Irish member may probably bring the question before Parliament, it would be well to consider what course the Government should be prepared to take. He was active also in promoting privately the publication of a counter-statement as 'an antidote to the poison,' and he recurs to the subject in a long letter to the Speaker (who had been the first Chief Secretary after the Union) describing generally the improved state of Ireland.

<sup>3</sup> For the expurgated edition see the *Annual Register* for 1814.

*Mr. Peel to the Speaker (Abbot).*

‘Sept. 30, 1814.

‘I never recollect such a cessation of outrage and disturbance as there has been for the last three months—it would seem presumptuous to say since the passing of the two Acts of last session.

‘It is impossible to advert to this without referring also to the oration delivered by Judge Fletcher. I will not say that it is disapproved of by all the friends of good order and subordination to the laws, but I may venture to assert that it has the unqualified approbation of every advocate for separation, and of every demagogue who flourished in the Catholic Board, or who survived the periods of 1798 and 1803. The discretion of the judge has been greater than his candour, for he has omitted in the publication those parts of his speech which every loyal man heard with deep regret and indignation. I have supplied the omissions in the inclosed printed report from the original manuscript procured from the reporter.

‘The obvious absurdity of inferring the tranquillity of a country from the paucity of committals (which may probably be the strongest proof of intimidation and general participation in crime), the ignorant exposition of those laws relating to the peace of the country which, whether wise enactments or not, were still the law of the land, and which as such should not have been condemned by one of its judges, are too obvious to require any comment. The sarcasms upon loyalty and loyal men are also too intelligible to be mistaken.

‘Notwithstanding this charge, however, the country is much, very much less disturbed than it was a few months since. One barony in the county of Waterford has been proclaimed under the Police Act, at the unanimous request of the magistracy; and a superintending magistrate and twenty special constables, selected from discharged sergeants of cavalry with certificates of good conduct, have been sent down to Cashel, with the best effect in this and in the

adjoining baronies. You are aware that the expense of this extraordinary establishment of police, the salary of the chief magistrate, the rent of his house, the cost of horses and accoutrements for the constables, is to be borne by the disturbed districts. It falls upon the occupying tenant. Every peasant has his half acre, and thus every peasant has a direct pecuniary interest in preventing his district from being proclaimed. The law operates like the still fines on townlands,<sup>4</sup> and the most effectual way, I am confident, of keeping the country tranquil is by making the inhabitants pay for the luxury of disturbance. The lower farmers universally say, when speaking of the Bill: "We had rather not prosecute, but we had rather prosecute than be fined." The practical proof of its efficacy is, that since the day on which Middlethird was proclaimed, I have not had the report of an outrage of any description either in that or in any other part of Tipperary, an extraordinary state of things in that county.

'We shall have no occasion for the enforcement of the Insurrection Act, and for that very reason I wish it were, as it ought to be in my opinion, the perpetual law of this country. It is a dormant law except when absolute necessity calls for its operation—and I cannot see the grievance or oppression of its enactments.

'As for the Catholic question, your letter reminded me of it, for, strange to say, though in Ireland, I had almost forgotten it. I believe its advocates in Parliament, Mr. Grattan and Mr. Plunket at least, would willingly forget it too. There is every now and then, I believe, a meeting in the country fomented by some itinerant demagogue going circuit; the meeting is of course, in the papers at least, "most numerous and respectably attended," some resolutions are entered into in the usual strain, pledging the parties "to sacrifice their lives rather than yield any securities," denouncing Mr. Grattan and his friends in Parliament, and exposing their own weakness and disunion. There are, too, occasionally some violent harangues, but, although they

<sup>4</sup> A remedy adopted by Mr. Peel for illicit distillation.

are very loud, they are very harmless, the guns of a ship in distress. Mr. Grattan intends to spend the next two years on the Continent. The Board has sunk into oblivion. Now that there is no danger from its abuse and denunciations, the Catholics themselves avow their satisfaction at its extinction.

‘As regards education, I was much struck with the unaffected and convincing earnestness with which Dr. Bell enters into the great object of his thoughts and labours. I addressed a letter to the Governors of the Foundling Hospital for the purpose of proving to other institutions that the Government is interested in the success of his plan. There are some wherein the less perhaps his name (which is naturally associated with the Established Church) is introduced the better.

‘In the House of Industry, which admits and supports between two and three thousand objects of charity, it is astonishing how sensitively the poorest and most wretched watch any attempt to interfere with the religious education of their children. Indeed, none is made. The children are instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic in the mode common both to Bell and Lancaster. The boys teach each other, and the proper apparatus of slates &c. is employed, apparently with great success. Protestant and Roman Catholic chaplains are paid by the governors, and to them is left the exclusive control over the religious instruction.

‘In the Foundling Hospital, wherein the adopted children of the State are naturally brought up in the established religion of it, not a doubt can be entertained of the success of Dr. Bell, if his system is, as I hope it will be, carried on with perseverance and unremitting attention. I shall make it my business occasionally to inspect its progress.

‘Education is making rapid advances here. It is a difficult and delicate subject to deal with, and I am sure nothing would be more likely to impede its advances than the ostentatious interference of the Government. Much may be done to encourage it. but the more quietly it is done the better.

‘I think after having read all this (if you have gotten so far) you will hardly be inclined again to remind me of my promise to write to you upon Irish subjects.

‘I shall protest most strongly against a visit to London before Christmas. Since I came here first I have already had nine voyages and journeys.’

*The Speaker to Mr. Peel.*

‘Kidbrooke : Oct. 17, 1814.

‘Accept my sincere thanks for your very interesting account of the present state of things in Ireland. I rejoice much in the tranquillity, and shall rejoice more whenever I see a reasonable prospect of its permanence.

‘But we must not flatter ourselves that such a work can be speedily accomplished. Putting down the turbulent and encouraging the well-affected are the first and indispensable steps towards a durable system, which perhaps can only be established beneficially and effectually by an improvement in the habits of the country gentlemen, a work in itself beyond all legislative reach, and attainable only by an increase of their intercourse with other persons and parts of the United Kingdom.

‘Mr. Justice Fletcher’s charge is reprinted at Bath, and circulated industriously throughout England. I am much obliged by the *variorum* edition which you have sent me. Our judges here do not deal in such political harangues, nor is it to be wished that they should, or else the Attorney-General should at all times have notice, that he might attend and make a speech on the other side.

‘The republication, which I have seen, contains a short biographical memoir of the Judge, stating him to be of no party, but promoted by Lord Fitzwilliam and the Duke of Bedford, and that his known friendship with Mr. Ponsonby, Mr. Grattan, and Mr. Curran, prove him to be uninfluenced by any party spirit.’

To be uninfluenced by party spirit was difficult in those days in Ireland, and Mr. Peel himself was often represented as being

in close alliance with the Orange party, whom Judge Fletcher denounced as chief disturbers of the public peace. But Peel's letters show at least how unfounded was the charge that he encouraged the formation of Orange societies. An instance of his prudence in that respect is recorded by his brother, who mentions that before first going to Dublin he changed the livery of his servants, lest the orange facings used by his family at Drayton should give offence in Ireland.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

' Stanhope Street : June 16, 1814.

' I have no doubt that there are many proceedings on the Twelfth of July at which the Catholics have a right to be offended, and occasionally deliberate insults are offered, which lead to melancholy consequences.

' The cause of the evil, which is of course to be found in the bitter animosity that exists between the two religions, particularly among the lower classes, makes the remedy proposed almost hopeless. Any direct interference either of the Legislature or of the Government to suppress those feelings would, I think, be worse than useless. We know how easy it is to offer an insult without infringing a law.

' But as regards persons under the control of the Government, I confess I think there is a material difference. If they meet as yeomen, and offer just cause of offence to their Catholic brethren, and we do not interfere to prevent it, we are in fact little less than a party to it. I do not see why we should not prevent a yeomanry band from attending an Orange procession. If we prevent a soldier from joining it with his arms or in his uniform, why not a drummer from joining it with his drum ? '

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

' July 1, 1813.

' To cure the distractions of Ireland by a public order ! Why not order uniformity of religion by a circular from the Royal Hospital ? I recollect a letter from Mr. North, the Governor of Ceylon when I was in the Colonial Department,

in which he stated that, finding on his arrival that the exchange with India was very unfavourable and unsteady, he had raised it by a public order, and directed that it should continue for a certain time at the rate at which he had fixed it. But either through the perverseness of the people, or from some other cause which he could not divine, the exchange was very uncivil and disobeyed the public order.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

' July 23, 1814.

' I am glad that you approve of what I said [in debate] on Orange societies. I was rather perplexed what to say. Supposing them to be perfectly legal, I must confess that I cannot look upon this, or any other political association in Ireland that is controlled by any other authority than that of the Government, without jealousy.

' I admire the principles that the Orangemen maintain and avow. But when I find among their rules direct reference to "the officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates of the respective regiments," I cannot conceal from myself the possible danger of such an institution.

' I shall leave London on Tuesday night, and as it is a year since I have been at home, I am sure you will make allowance for my wish to stay there a day or two before I return to Ireland. It is literally upon the road.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

' I suppose I shall be blamed by the one party for going too far in the vindication of Orangemen, and by the other for not going far enough. The more I think upon the subject, the more am I convinced that even the most loyal associations in Ireland for political purposes are dangerous engines. We may derive a useful lesson from the Volunteers [of 1782].'

The anticipated blame for going too far soon took shape in an anonymous letter, one of many such preserved :

‘Sir,—Your defending the Orangemen in the late meeting of Parliament, together with your other efforts to torture trampled Ireland, have determined me to become your assassin, if you do not abandon your well-paid tyranny. Bellingham shot Mr. Perceval through private malice ; but if I am obliged to act so, it will be for the general happiness of Ireland, when I shall be no more.

‘A DETERMINED IRISHMAN.’

On the other hand, from the High Sheriff and Grand Jury of Fermanagh, Mr. Peel received a grateful address, his answer to which (by his own account, the only communication of the kind he had held with Orangemen) was guarded.

‘I deemed it but an act of justice to vindicate them from those imputations which I thought to be unmerited ; and, while I disclaimed distinctly the approval of any associations of a political character that are not under the control of Government, I willingly bore testimony to the loyalty of the individuals, and to the dependence that might be placed upon their services in the time of danger, should the State require them.

‘I expressed also a confident hope that in their peaceable demeanour at all other times would be found a refutation of the charges which had been directed against them, and a proof of that attachment to their Sovereign which they profess.’

The change of Lord Lieutenant in no way diminished Mr. Peel’s responsibilities and troubles in dispensing patronage. He writes to Lord Whitworth :

‘Perhaps you will think me very insatiate in the demands which I prefer from our parliamentary friends. But you will recollect that I have the whole accumulated host upon my back, and you must make some allowance for the torments which they inflict upon me. They are apt to expect reward where they perform the service—upon the field of battle.’



And to Mr. Gregory, as regards minor appointments, he explains :

‘ I do not write to Lord Whitworth on these matters. He will recollect that I am in the midst of all the vultures, and must throw a little food among them occasionally.’

Higher posts practically at the disposal of the Government were comparatively few, and apologies addressed to the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer and to the Home Secretary show how candidates even with the best interest had to wait their turn.

*Mr. Peel to the Right Hon. W. Fitzgerald.*

‘ Sept. 26, 1814.

‘ Nothing is more mistaken than the extent of the Lord Lieutenant’s patronage—at least, of that which is left at his disposal according to the present system of county interests &c. I cannot give you a stronger proof of it than exists in one of the names which is recorded with that of your friend. When Lord —— was here as an aide-de-camp, he lodged at the house of a Mr. D., a shoemaker. Mrs. D. had a son, who, by some accident or other, bore a much stronger resemblance to Lord —— than to Mr. D. Lord —— wrote to Lord Whitworth, on the latter’s first arrival in this country, earnestly entreating the appointment of this young man—who was educated in Trinity College, and is properly qualified for it—to some situation of about 200*l.* a year, with a reasonable hope of further advancement according to his merits—“to be put on the ladder” was his expression. A year has elapsed : of course Lord Whitworth has every good disposition towards him ; but he has not put his foot upon the first step yet.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Sidmouth.*

‘ Dec. 21, 1814.

‘ We told Mr. —— that we had every disposition to promote his views, but that, according to an invariable custom, the departure from which would probably subject us to

serious embarrassment, we must consult the Marquis of Waterford before we sanctioned an arrangement for the disposal of revenue patronage in Waterford. We volunteered to urge his Lordship's acquiescence, but in vain, for he decidedly objected to it. Upon receiving your note I was determined to make another attempt, and I therefore wrote, assuring him that Lord Whitworth and I were extremely anxious to have the means of complying with your request. I inclose the answer.'

In the selection of special magistrates for proclaimed districts care was taken to avoid even the appearance either of local or of private influence.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'May 11, 1815.

'I am sorry you are annoyed, but we thought the nomination of Major H. would be liable to the suspicion of its having been procured through the influence of the Chancellor, and as good at least, perhaps a better magistrate could be found.

'Do not appoint Lord Norbury's man because Norbury wishes it, take anyone else you please. Can Sir G. Hewett name any captain of militia, distinguished for his good conduct? My only feeling is to keep clear of all applications proceeding from the same motives which in general influence applications from our friends in Ireland.'

The free exchange of patronage for political support being normal and notorious, it is not surprising that candidates without political influence sometimes resorted to pecuniary bribes. But it is curious to find their simple faith in the efficacy of such means carrying them so far as to address overtures directly to the highest quarters. Mr. Gregory being solicited for a surveyorship by a gentleman who expresses readiness 'to contribute any compliment necessary, or *douceur* he is pleased to mention for his trouble,' proposes indignantly to proceed against the applicant; and Mr. Peel, after dissuading his Under Secretary from that course, four days later finds himself in a similar predicament.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘May 27, 1814.

‘I am quite satisfied that you would repent of a prosecution, unless you are more public-spirited than I am. Recollect Lord Sidmouth’s prosecution of the tinman, for precisely the same offer, for which he was exposed (perhaps very unjustly) to endless ridicule. I think if you inform Mr. — that, even if he had a just claim, it would be entirely set aside by the corrupt offer which he has made, and have him struck off the commission of the peace with as much publicity and disgrace as can be, it will be sufficient.’

‘May 31.—Our characters must be very bad to encourage two such offers as we have received within the last week. Yours must be gone past redemption when a magistrate tries to corrupt you. The sailor’s bribe I do not consider half so great a reflection upon me. He has probably sailed with Lord Cochrane, and heard his captain descant on the iniquity of public men, lands in Ireland, inquires who is Chief Secretary, and offers him fifty guineas, without hearing his general character. As the sailor writes from Ross Carbery, he had travelled probably on the Skibbereen road, and, hearing it was a Government work, was confirmed in his opinions of public men.’

To an offer through Mr. Gregory from a peer to sell his political support for Church patronage, Mr. Peel replies :

‘I quite concur in the view you have taken. I think it would be unworthy of Government to purchase votes by the promise of patronage, especially of ecclesiastical patronage; and I know no distinction between a promise express and implied, except that the latter is perhaps more binding. Besides, in a commercial view, it is not very wise to alienate patronage in favour of a candidate who may be unsuccessful.’

Honours empty of profit appear to have been in less demand. ‘It is really most extraordinary,’ Mr. Peel writes to Lord Whitworth, ‘and mortifying in some respects though convenient in

others, to think how few commoners there are in Ireland who can prefer any claim from station and character to the peerage.' And again :

' July 21, 1814.

' I have received your letter respecting promotions in the peerage and baronetage of Ireland. It is singular there should be so few applications for these distinctions. If any emolument were attached to them, no doubt there would be ten times the number. But I fear one of the reasons for this paucity is that the honours in question have been rather too profusely granted. When ——— thinks it a degradation to have his uncle made a baron, and says he "has been taken in" unless he has further promotion ; and when ——— declined paying 20*l.* or 30*l.* additional fees in order that his nephew might be included in the patent, I am afraid we must admit that Irish honours are cheaply esteemed.'

Cheap, however, as Irish honours were, it was necessary to draw the line somewhere, and to Sir F. Flood (who seems always to have amused him) Mr. Peel writes : ' I fear I must request you to advise your friend not to postpone his marriage in the expectation of a baronetcy. I am sure he cannot want that addition to his other recommendations.'

The higher legal, as well as ecclesiastical, offices, it is satisfactory to note, were excepted from the general practice, being conferred on grounds not of political interest or personal solicitation, but of character and professional standing.

*The Attorney-General (Saurin) to Mr. Peel.*

' Sept. 1813.

' It gives me great satisfaction to find that Lord Whitworth and you coincide in the views of our good friend the Chancellor as to the offices of the law. In my humble opinion there is nothing so essential to the stability of the Government and the preservation of the connection between the two countries as the appointment of proper men to the judicial and legal offices. And to give them that weight and consequence which they ought to have in the public

opinion, nothing is so important, and so creditable at the same time to the Government, as that the selection of them should be made from character, and not from politics or connection. With a Bench, and with law officers, of that description, I would not hesitate to say that we should have nothing to fear.'

*Mr. Peel to the Lord Chancellor (Manners).*

'Sept. 14, 1813.

'I have to return you many thanks for your letter relative to the Serjeantcy. I can assure you that Lord Whitworth and myself most fully concur in the view which you have taken of this matter; and that we are perfectly satisfied that the appointment most desirable for the Government to make is that which will be most approved of by the profession, and which will convince them that professional merit will give the strongest claim on the Government for advancement.

'The Chief Justice seems to think that Joy is an abler man than Jebb, though he gives them both credit for great ability, and, what is very material, attachment to the Government on principle. If they are too proud to solicit the appointment, for my part I should rather be inclined to consider it a proof of their fitness for the situation. It is a species of pride which occasions very little practical inconvenience in Ireland.'

## CHAPTER VI.

1815.

Lords Justices in Ireland—Corn Law Disturbances in London—Return of Bonaparte from Elba—Effects in Ireland—Withdrawal of British Troops—Irish Yeomanry—Alarmist Magistrates—Mr. Peel refuses to apply the Insurrection Act—Visit to Paris and to Waterloo—Napoleon at St. Helena—Catholic Petition rejected—Quarrel between O'Connell and Peel—O'Connell's Apology in 1825.

EARLY in 1815, but after Mr. Peel's departure to London, the Viceregal Court at Dublin was plunged suddenly into mourning. The youthful Duke of Dorset (known from Byron's affectionate lines addressed to him at school) had come to stay with the Duchess his mother (now married to Lord Whitworth); and, having gone out hunting near Dublin, was killed by a fall from his horse.

On this sad occasion Mr. Peel showed his warm sympathy, not only in words, but by promptly arranging to set the Lord Lieutenant free for a time to leave Ireland. This was effected by appointing as 'Lords Justices,' to conduct the government in his absence, the Lord Chancellor, the Primate, and the Commander-in-Chief.

Mr. Peel had desired that the third should be the Chief Justice (Norbury), remarking, 'It is fortunate that there is such a man; the temporary government could not be in better hands;' and when objections were raised to thus combining executive with judicial responsibility, he wrote: 'Lord Mansfield, when Chief Justice, sat in the same Cabinet with Lord Chatham; Lord Hardwicke was, I believe, a Cabinet Minister, and Lord Ellenborough certainly in later times was admitted into the Cabinet when he was Chief Justice. But if a substitute is necessary, I am sure no better could be found than the Commander of the Forces.' To Mr. Gregory also he writes: 'I need hardly tell you how much my confidence in you contributes to the composure with which I contemplate the proposed arrangement.'

To Lord Desart, who suggests that Lord Whitworth may not return to Ireland, Mr. Peel replies :

‘His departure from the Government would embarrass me not a little. But I do not know whether you are right in conjecturing that it would “give me some trouble.” I rather think it would save me from some—from all connected with my office—for I should probably bid adieu to Ireland.’

Peace and a good harvest having brought back corn to moderate prices (wheat, for instance, falling from 12s. 8d. a quarter in 1812 to 6s. 8d. in 1815) tenant farmers and land-owners felt the change severely, and insisted on protection, alike in England and in Ireland. One of the first measures therefore introduced by Ministers in this year was a Corn Bill (modelled on that of 1670) excluding foreign wheat until the price should rise to 8os., with similar prohibition of other cereal imports.

The Bill was warmly approved in Ireland, and eloquently supported by Grattan, who blamed its opponents as founding their policy on ‘a vain philosophy—the error of Mr. Smith, refuted by Malthus—that you should get corn where you can get it cheapest.’ He appealed to them, having driven Ireland out of manufacture, not now to drive her out of tillage; not to consign the large proportion of her people, now engaged in growing corn, to famine and to tumult, but to let the two nations live with one another and by one another—England clothing Ireland, Ireland feeding England.

Mr. Peel—at this time a zealous advocate for protective duties—urged that ‘the production of corn was Ireland’s manufacture, no less than that of linen, and every argument for protecting the latter would apply equally to the former.’ Sir Robert Peel, on the contrary, held that ‘by the measures now on the table the wise system pursued for years would be subverted, and the labourers prevented from putting the real wealth of the country into marketable shape.’ The manufacturing interests (themselves protected) raised their voices loudly against the new impost on the food of their workpeople, and the famished populace in the London streets took what means they could to make their feelings known to the authors of such legislation—especially to Mr. Robinson, who had moved the preliminary resolution.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Desart.*

‘Feb. 23, 1815.

‘We are now engaged in right earnest upon the corn question, with every prospect of success. I expect the

Bill will have finally passed the House of Commons before Easter. I hope it will be thought that 26s. per quarter affords sufficient protection to Irish oats.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

' March 7, 1815.

'The progress of the question is not quite so auspicious as its commencement was. There is a great clamour out of doors, and last night in the neighbourhood of the House of Commons we were indebted to the military for the preservation of peace. Several members were most vehemently hissed and hooted, and some did not make their escape without the loss of half their coats and a little personal injury. Croker and Fitzgerald, who had been dining with me, were among the sufferers. There is, at the moment I am writing, an immense assemblage of people in Old Palace Yard, convened in consequence of a requisition to the High Bailiff. I passed through the outskirts of the crowd, but they seemed very peaceably inclined.

'I am sorry to hear that Robinson's house was attacked last night and much damaged, the furniture thrown out of the windows, or rather the apertures where windows once were. He had fortunately, in expectation of the popular vengeance, removed Lady Sarah Robinson, or her situation would have been very distressing. I am glad that we have got back the Life Guards. They are most efficient in their present sphere of action.'

*Lord Palmerston to Mr. Peel.*

' War Office: March 9, 1815.

'My dear Peel,—As I think it highly probable our street [Stanhope Street] may be attacked to-night, let me suggest to you a measure of precaution which I have ordered to be adopted, namely, to nail a very strong boarding behind the fanlight over the street-door; because, if the missile weapons are well plied against it, the garrison must be driven out of the hall.



‘I have given orders to my servants to meet the first discharge of stones with a volley of small shot from a bedroom window, as this will pepper the faces of the mob without any danger of killing any of them, and will at the same time be an earnest of what a further perseverance in the attack might produce. By daubing the inside of the glass with flour and water the boarding will not attract notice.

‘Yours,

‘PALMERSTON.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘March 10, 1815.

‘After the accounts which you have seen in the newspapers (in my opinion exaggerated ones) of the actual disturbances in this city, and the disposition to commit further excesses, it will be some satisfaction to you to know that yesterday passed off very quietly. The determination which has been shown by the occupiers of houses attacked to go any lengths in their defence has done more to secure us from tumult than any other demonstrations of power. I had reason to expect an attack last night, for which I had made suitable preparations.

‘This day the Corn Bill is read a third time in the House of Commons. Not a soul doubts the advantage Ireland will derive from it.’

Meanwhile on the Continent events were passing which were soon to give other anxieties to the Secretary at War and call the Life Guards to more serious duty. An officer of the Irish Treasury, happening to be on the Mediterranean coast, sent early tidings of this to Mr. Peel, who despatched at once his instructions to Ireland.

*Colonel Barry to Mr. Peel.*

‘Nice: Monday, March 6, 1815.

‘The extraordinary event which took place last Wednesday may render my passage through France impracticable.

I shall just mention facts, and leave you to draw your own conclusions.

‘On Wednesday night Bonaparte landed in the Bay of St. Juan, to the westward of the promontory of Antibes, with from 1,200 to 1,500 men and four pieces of artillery. He sent five officers and twenty-five men to Antibes on Thursday morning, who entered the town and immediately shouted “Vive l’Empereur !” The gates were shut, and the drawbridges raised, and these men were made prisoners. Bonaparte and his army bivouacked just outside the little fishing town of Cannes that night. On Thursday he marched to Grasse, about fifteen miles from hence.

‘Here he left his artillery and carriage in charge of the mayor, saying he would send for them in a few days. The next morning he marched for Gap, and it is supposed he intends to take the direction of Lyons. He circulated some proclamations in manuscript, stating that he was come to rescue France from her state of degradation, that his eagles were flying from spire to spire, and that in two days they would be fixed upon Notre Dame. The Prince of Monaco was passing through Cannes, and was taken prisoner by Bertrand, who brought him to Bonaparte. He asked him where he was going. He replied “to take possession of his states at Monaco.” He then inquired where he came from, to which the Prince replied, “From Paris.” He asked if all were quiet there, and seemed surprised at being answered in the affirmative. He then dismissed him.

‘I saw the Prince of Monaco as he passed through here. On taking leave of him, Bonaparte said, “You are going to your states, and I am going to mine.” The Prince was travelling with six horses. Bonaparte said he thought four would be sufficient, and took his leaders from him.

‘We have not had any accounts to-day where he is, but Massena has marched from Marseilles, and the prefects are very busy calling out all the Gardes nationaux. He seems to have plenty of money, and pays liberally for everything.

I understand he sometimes rides in advance of his column three or four miles, with one of his generals and an orderly dragoon.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.* 5

'Irish Office: March 16, 1815.

'The extraordinary and afflicting intelligence of this day from France will be fully detailed, I have no doubt, in the "Courier." It will, I fear, produce great effect in Ireland, and will make it our duty to be, if possible, doubly vigilant. Pray direct the particular attention of the police to any Frenchman or foreigner who may be in Dublin, and whose character is not thoroughly known.

'Instead of going to Paris, I should not be much surprised (if affairs in France go on as unprosperously as I expect they will) if I thought it advisable to pay a visit to Dublin. There seems, from the account you have sent me, a bad spirit in the country. Bonaparte's success will serve to aggravate it, and if it makes any strong impression, there will be great awkwardness in the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary being both absent.'

'*March 18.*—Presuming that it will best suit the convenience of all parties, I shall continue to correspond with you on all matters of public concern, and shall request you to submit my letters to the Lords Justices, and to signify to me their pleasure and opinions upon matters upon which it may be necessary for me to receive them.'

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. Littlehales.*

'March 16, 1815.

'It is the duty of the Irish Government to be vigilant and on their guard at all times; but, with the prospect before us, want of caution would be doubly criminal. It is possible that there may be urgent demands upon the disposable military force of the country. I fear we are not in a situation to contribute much towards the exigencies of foreign service.'

*Mr. Peel to Sir George Hewett (Commander-in-Chief).*

‘ March 18, 1815.

‘ The number of effective firelocks at present in Ireland, including troops of every description, does not exceed 27,000 men, to which must be added 3,000 mounted cavalry. I am very sorry to find that it is proposed to detach two regiments to strengthen the army in Belgium. Lord Whitworth and I have urged as strongly as we could the extreme importance of maintaining a respectable force in Ireland, possibly under present circumstances the absolute necessity of it. I fear, notwithstanding, that two regiments of the line will be withdrawn, but it has been determined to postpone the execution of the order for the return of the British and the disembodying of the Irish militia.

‘ A letter from Paris gives a much more favourable account than could have been expected. Bonaparte still at Lyons, with not more than 8,000 men, Ney advancing between him and Paris, and Massena operating in his rear.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘ March 22, 1815.

‘ We must, I fear, make up our minds for the possession of Paris by Bonaparte. I hope that this will not imply the possession of the throne of France.

‘ The Bonapartists of Ireland (I regret to think how many are worthy of the name) will, however, consider the arrival of Bonaparte at Paris a matter of the greatest congratulation, and I have little doubt that the effect of this intelligence, while it lasts, will be as powerful as the actual abdication of the Bourbons could produce.

‘ Whatever precautions can be quietly taken to guard against any sudden burst of exultation which may possibly arise from the intelligence of Bonaparte’s occupation of Paris would be wisely taken. For an evil so undefined in shape I know how difficult it is to define the remedy. All that I can do is to apprise you of the probability of the event,

and all that you can do is to put the police, civil and military, on their guard, to muster all their strength, and keep it within command while the uncertainty lasts. Such a place as Paris is more subject to sudden fits of enthusiasm, and turbulent joy resulting from news among the populace, than Dublin, and ten times more so than London. But quiet and unostentatious vigilance and precaution are never misplaced. I must say for the Home Department here and Lord Paget, who has commanded the cavalry in London, that they have managed the mob admirably since the first explosion.'

*Mr. Peel to the Attorney-General.*

' March 22, 1815.

'The accounts are very bad—the national guards ridiculed by the people, and admitted by all to be only fit for the purposes of police; indifference among the great mass of the people, and therefore nothing to oppose to a power whose numbers are comparatively insignificant, but whose force must be immense from want of means to resist it.

'A good authority writes that the people of Paris were absolutely fools enough firmly to believe that the invasion of Bonaparte is a plot of the English to create civil war in France and thus to weaken her power. He says nothing would have destroyed an impression so general and so firmly rooted but the decampment of almost all the English at Paris. They betrayed, I suppose, a sincerity of alarm which could not be mistaken.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

' March 25, 1815.

'Soulst sent an old soldier to get news. To his great surprise, he met Bonaparte alone in the street at Auxerre, who recognised him, asked him with whom he was now serving, and what he was doing at Auxerre. The man was so confounded that he told Bonaparte fairly the object of his mission. Bonaparte asked him whether he had collected all the information he wished for, and if he had, begged of

him to take it back to Soult with all speed, and to add that he should very soon be at Paris. I had this from a Frenchman who had it from the soldier. It is but one of the many proofs which Bonaparte gave of his confidence.'<sup>1</sup>

In Ireland, as in France, at this time it was uncertain how far the Government could depend on some of the troops. As to the behaviour of the militia, if disbanded, there had been apprehensions, and Mr. Peel was not at ease about the yeomanry. While the military authorities were pressing for the immediate reduction of that force as useless, the Chief Secretary was bent on trying whether some of them, especially from the North, might not be employed to advantage.

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. Littlehales.*

‘March 27, 1815.

‘Admitting that the yeomanry are generally speaking unfit for those very duties in the performance of which their main utility would consist, namely in relieving the army from the maintenance of internal order and the collection of the revenue, I am not quite prepared to come to your conclusion that it would be the wisest measure to disband the whole force. The most vehement loyalty in Ireland is apt to take offence. The great proportion of the yeomanry is now little more than a sort of neutral force, and I fear might become something worse if ground of dissatisfaction were afforded.

‘I may be told that by supposing even the possibility of resistance on their part I admit their unfitness to be entrusted with arms. To this I should answer that I do not think there is any compromise of the authority of Government in gradually diminishing them instead of at once disbanding the whole, and if there is to be a great accession to the general funds of disaffection, I would not throw it in at a moment when the state of those funds (like other funds) is so very unpromising.’

<sup>1</sup> Justified by Soult's rejoining him.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘April 1, 1815.

‘I think the French Consul and his brothers a very suspicious tribe. He can have no duties of Consul to perform now that Bonaparte has assumed the reins of government. I am perfectly well aware of the Duke of Feltre’s<sup>2</sup> connection with Ireland. I have little doubt that we shall soon hear of his defection. If Augereau, who proclaimed Bonaparte publicly a coward, returns to his allegiance, who will not? As to any moral principle, or regard for what we call honour, they are all on a footing.’

*Mr. Peel to Sir Charles Saxton.*

‘April 5, 1815.

‘I think that Bonaparte has a very precarious hold of France. He is the slave of the Jacobins, and will find it impossible to gratify them and the army too. His abolition of the slave trade was a very parliamentary measure. I really believe it was solely with the view of getting a little credit in the House of Commons, which he will not get, for the artifice is seen through by all, except perhaps Babington.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘April 8, 1815.

‘Nothing is decided respecting peace or war. If the Allies are ready to fight their own battles, without requiring our money, I think we shall have war. We shall not encourage them to combine, against their own inclinations, but our Government would be glad to find them inclined.

‘I wish the declaration had been less savage. It will make a humbler tone the more humiliating. Bonaparte will avoid giving any pretext for war for the present. I think he and Carnot cannot agree long.’

‘April 15.—The Government here is determined to take 5,000 men from us, and run any risks. Lord Whitworth and I have laid before Lord Sidmouth the state of the

<sup>2</sup> War Minister of Bonaparte, and of the Bourbons.

country. His answer is unanswerable by us. "I know the danger in Ireland, but the Government think it better to take the chance of danger there, for the chance of success which an addition of 5,000 men will give to Lord Wellington."

'May 3.—About the removal of the 9th, our cause of complaint is not so great as you seem to think. It is necessary to send a cavalry regiment to Belgium. The 23rd are at Manchester, and there was hardly another man and horse in the north of England. Instead of sending the 9th to Belgium, the 23rd is sent; and I suppose the Government here, taking a view of the danger to be apprehended on all sides, are afraid of leaving Manchester (which is pretty quiet, but has been very much the reverse) and that whole district of country without a single man. You cannot conceive the denudation of England of troops; there is hardly an effective man in it.'

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. Littlehales.*

'May 4, 1815.

'I am sorry that Sir George Hewett is likely to object to the experiment we propose to make of employing a small portion of the yeomanry on duty out of their baronies. But I believe Lord Whitworth is as well inclined as I am to persevere in spite of Sir George's objection, however decided. If they prove that they can be depended upon, it will raise the whole body in the estimation and confidence of the loyal, and in the apprehension and detestation of the disloyal. And if they prove that they cannot be depended upon, we may save the public the expense of maintaining the establishment.'

'May 15.—I entirely concur in the view which Sir G. Hewett has taken of the great impolicy of employing the military in distraining for rent, and in the collection of tithes. The general principle is an abominable one, whatever facilities the practice may afford. Our civil power is a sinecure, not because there is no occasion for its exertions, but because it makes the military power perform its duties whenever it can.'



*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘June 17, 1815.

‘I perfectly agree with you upon the expediency of precaution against a sudden movement. It is absurd to argue that such a movement would be madness, and therefore it is unnecessary to be prepared. The history of Ireland is pregnant with proofs that the hopelessness of final success is no impediment in the way of an absurd attempt to succeed. It is not success that we are to guard against, but the mischiefs that may and must attend even complete failure.

‘If Lord Whitworth thinks more yeomanry should be called out, I should strongly advise him to command them to come forth. Their consent would of course be necessary, and that would be easily obtained. Littlehales tells me of difficulties about pay, deficiency of estimate &c. I shall advise him to cut the Gordian knot. I have no notion of being prevented by the letter of an Act of Parliament from averting any serious evil to the State, or depriving it of any great benefit. I am sure Parliament will always be ready to sanction a liberal construction of its enactments, when the motive is clearly a good one, and some great advantage is to result.’

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. Littlehales.*

‘*Salus reipublicæ suprema lex.* In applying that maxim to our particular case we will construe the *suprema lex* into “an Act to amend and extend the several Acts now in force with respect to the yeomanry of Ireland.”’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘June 23, 1815.

‘For the purpose of reinforcing the Duke of Wellington it is intended to send out of the United Kingdom every regular soldier. We must therefore immediately take means for supplying as well as we can the immense loss we are about to sustain. Inclosed is the Act authorising you

to order the Irish militia to be embodied. I think we ought to embody every regiment that is not so weak and absolutely inefficient as to be of no service.'

While maintaining exceptional vigilance during Napoleon's brief return to power, Mr. Peel continued firmly to discountenance vague alarms, refusing to entertain any application for the powers of the Insurrection Act, unless supported by irrefutable proof of serious disturbance.

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. Littlehales.*

'April 8, 1815.

'Such absurd unauthenticated statements of conspiracies and plots are really hardly worth notice. We receive so many false alarms, that we ought not to be very much blamed if when the wolf was really there we should disbelieve the story. The real state of things is bad enough, without viewing it through the distorted magnifier with which most of our country correspondents are apt to view it. Nine magistrates, without adducing one single proof, affirm that the adjacent country is in a well-organised state for rebellion. It may be so, but nothing would be so easy as to state the grounds upon which they believe it. The disposition of the people may be very bad, and I may be able to give no distinct and specific reason for thinking that it is so, though I am convinced it is. But if I say they are organised, I ought also to be able to say how I made the discovery.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'April 18, 1815.

'Whenever a case is made out for the Insurrection Act, I think it should be instantly applied, because its operation will be very extensive in districts remote from the proclaimed one. But it should not be applied upon assertions from quarters even of the utmost respectability, except where evidence is producible, as it always must be in the case of outrage actually committed. You do not convict a man without evidence: why should you convict a district without it?'

'April 29.—We ought to have been impeached if we had enforced the Insurrection Act upon such grounds as those on which the magistrates of Westmeath and Meath desired it. When we come to consider not their pompous memorials, but the evidence that we have of actual disturbance, is there ground for all the alarm that seems to pervade the country? Are not Waterford, Kilkenny, Tipperary, and Queen's County more tranquil then they were last year? Clare appears to be worse, and Limerick no better. I dare say—I have no doubt, indeed—that the disposition of the lower orders in all these counties is very bad, but from proof of actual outrage I cannot discover that it is much worse than usual.'

*Mr. Peel to the Attorney-General.*

'April 29, 1815.

'I am strongly inclined to bequeath to Ireland an amendment of the general police of the country. But as I am very anxious to get to Ireland as soon as possible, I should not be desirous of pressing it in the present session.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'May 17, 1815.

'It would be well to inform the magistrates that the Lord Lieutenant has a fixed determination not to put the Insurrection Act in force, unless called upon by urgent and imperious necessity; that only such a case can warrant the Executive Government in confining within their houses during the night the inhabitants of a whole district upon the penalty of transportation, and in introducing a form of trial unknown to the ordinary law.'

In this summer, being invited to receive an honorary degree at Oxford, Mr. Peel met there with recognition of his rising fame so warm as to foreshadow his future closer connection with the University, and to draw from his father an expression of lively satisfaction: 'Your reception at Oxford was very grateful to me, and as your conduct has raised you to this flattering

eminence, your principles and good sense will be your best guides in future.'

On his return to London, he found the whole European prospect changed by the battle of Waterloo.

*Lord Conyngham to Mr. Peel.*

'Brussels: June 20, 1815.

'From the very bottom of my heart I congratulate you on Wellington's splendid victory. It is true the carnage has been great, but the glorious result has exceeded all expectation. I rode over the field the day after the battle. Well might you trace British valour, and Wellington's superior genius. The whole place was strewed with dead and dying. In short, I believe the whole business up with the French. Wellington sleeps to-night at Malplaquet. He left this yesterday in high spirits.'

The session was drawing to a close, and Mr. Peel was disposed to seize the opportunity of visiting France. But he had first to stay and vote with his party for one of those subsidies to Royal persons, against which public feeling was beginning to rebel.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'June 27, 1815.

'If Paris is to be occupied by a British army, I should feel an inclination to repair the disappointment which Bonaparte's departure from Elba caused me at Easter. The idea only entered into my head two minutes since, when Fitzgerald told me that the Duke of Wellington would probably be in Paris to-morrow.'

'June 30.—We have got a most awkward question respecting an addition to the Duke of Cumberland's allowance. It has been and will be opposed in every stage, and our majority of seventeen is decreasing. No man with common feeling would accept six times 6,000*l.* a year on the terms on which the Duke would receive it. The debate is not very flattering either to him or to his wife. One gentleman said he did not believe more than one-half of

the reports against them. Tierney replied, "If you believe one-half, you must have a worse opinion of them than of any other human being."

'*July 3.*—I heard in confidence this morning that Lord Liverpool has had a letter from the Duke, intimating the probability that he would be in Paris yesterday. In this case I should be enabled to set out probably on Thursday. I shall go with Fitzgerald, and perhaps Croker.'

'*July 4.*—No accounts have been received from the armies this day. I trust the Duke and Blücher are at Paris. I believe the latest intelligence from thence is that of Tuesday last, now a week since. We are very anxious to know what has become of Bonaparte.

'We were beaten last night on the Duke of Cumberland's question by a majority of one, contrary to our own expectations as well as those of our adversaries. Nothing could exceed the exertions of both sides. McMahon was with me this morning, and assured me that a purse of 500*l.* had been made up for the purpose of paying Lord Cochrane's fine. He was in the House, and his vote decided the question against us. I hear the Prince is much annoyed, and justly too. It is a most unfortunate exposure of his Royal brother, who would have reconciled himself perhaps to all the abuse which has been lavished on himself and his wife if he could have secured the additional allowance, but to lose the money after all the attacks he has sustained will, I have no doubt, affect him in the tenderest point. His appearance in London in an outlandish dress, and with a face overgrown with hair, has I really believe done him material disservice.'

'*July 6.*—Still no accounts from Paris or the armies. We are extremely anxious for intelligence, and though after our recent successes we may justly place confidence in our army and its commander, our anxiety is mixed up with a little uneasiness. There are various stories, all with about as much foundation as the "Morning Chronicle's" report of my mission to Paris.'

On July 11, Mr. Peel and his companions reached the French capital, where they remained a fortnight,<sup>3</sup> were presented to the King and his brother, and dined with Lord Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington, Peel sitting next to the Duke, who conversed freely with him on the recent battle.

Proceeding thence to Brussels, they rode over the field of Waterloo with the Duke of Richmond, an excellent guide, as he had been present through most of the action. Then, travelling hard for ten days, including thirty-three hours in a westerly gale on the Irish Channel, early in August Peel took up his work again in Dublin, where one of the first letters he received apprised him of Bonaparte's departure to St. Helena.

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'Admiralty: Aug. 4, 1815.

'You may be glad to know that Buonaparte is at last off. The foolish curiosity of the people and the refractory spirit of his suite rendered his longer stay in Plymouth Sound very inconvenient. We therefore have ordered the "Bellerophon" to sea, and Cockburn shall follow and make the transfer *en pleine mer*.

'General Buonaparte, as we officially call him, is very averse to the St. Helena voyage, and says he will not go. But go he must, *bon gré, mal gré*, unless indeed he kills himself, as he threatens to do, or unless L'Allemand and Gourgaud kill him rather than see him removed, which they declare they will. This Lord Keith thinks would be the best *dénouement* of all, because we should then get rid of the whole party, Buonaparte dead *ex hypothesi*, and the others hanged for his murder.

'I shall send to Dover to pay the duty on your things, which it seems is all right. I send you your little dictionary. The Prince had heard of your cuirass, and sent to me to endeavour to get it, "as he had no officer's," but I said you had taken it to Ireland.'

'Dec. 4.—I have this day heard of Cockburn's arrival at St. Helena, Buonaparte and his suite well, but in only

<sup>3</sup> For details see the *Croker Papers*.

tolerable spirits. He seems a little melancholy, but evidently has some transient hopes of escape. Captain Denham, who brought me the despatches, the night before he was to sail, dined with an old naval friend who is settled in the island. His house is a mile or two out of James Town, and the house in which Napoleon is temporarily is close to his. After dinner in came Buonaparte, to play a rubber of whist in a quiet way. The old gentleman had the gout; but his two daughters, Napoleon, and the Captain made up the party. The great man took out four napoleons to mark, and one of the young ladies, taking one up, asked what coin it was, on which the polite hero snatched it rather roughly from her, and pointing to the impression, exclaimed, "C'est moi." Whether the provoking ignorance of the girl ruffled him, or that it was a mere accident, he missed deal, and seemed so vexed that they begged him to deal again, which attempting he again missed. And then, said the Captain, it is almost incredible the degree of convulsive fury which his countenance displayed. The house was searched for old cards, which he said would be more easily managed, and Count Las Cases (his only attendant) was ordered to sit down at a spare table to play the cards alone till they should run smooth. He (before they sat down to cards) got into a conversation with the girls. He asked the younger if she had ever been in England? "Yes, she had been educated there." Had she studied geography? "A little!" What was the capital of Russia? "The ancient capital was Moscow." Then with a look of pleased self-conceit, he asked, Who burnt it? But the girl answered quietly that "she had heard it, but she believed untruly, attributed to the French soldiers." He looked a little disappointed at her not having made any allusion to him. He asked her which, the French or English, fought best, and when she from politeness hesitated to answer, he said, "The French do. They are equally brave, but the French have more practice, and therefore fight best." "I could scarcely refrain," said Captain Denham, "from saying, Why then are you here?"

Notwithstanding, or perhaps owing to, the renewal of war, the Catholics of the United Kingdom continued this year to press for relief from their disabilities, and Mr. Peel, at the Home Secretary's request, explained at length to him why, from an Irish point of view, he thought it inexpedient to take their claims at this time into consideration. He begins by citing the two resolutions adopted by the House of Commons in 1812 and 1813, contemplating 'such a final and satisfactory adjustment as may be conducive to the stability of the Protestant Establishment,' and on the other hand two decisions of the Roman Catholic prelates, pronouncing the securities proposed by Grattan to be 'utterly incompatible with the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church and with the free exercise of their religion,' and a manifesto of the Irish Catholic Board, declaring that 'no settlement could be final or satisfactory which involved any alteration to be made by authority of Parliament in the discipline of the Catholic Church in Ireland.' In view of these conflicting declarations, he argues :

*Mr. Peel to Lord Sidmouth.*

'The alternatives, therefore, offered for the choice of Parliament are, either to let matters remain as they at present stand, or to repeal all the laws which affect the Roman Catholics, without requiring any of those securities from the consequences of foreign influence and interference upon which the Catholic monarchs of this country in former times have insisted, and the Catholic sovereign of every other country now insists.

'Suppose Parliament inclined to overlook the inconsistency of yielding at the present time what the warmest advocates of the Catholics did not require of it, nay, would not have consented that it should yield, in 1813, and disposed to sacrifice every other consideration to the hope of conciliating and satisfying the Roman Catholics of Ireland, I feel the strongest conviction that a compliance with the full extent of the demands now made would not satisfy them, or tend very materially to reconcile them to the British connection.

'After the conflicts which the Executive Government has had with that very body which under another name still



acts on their behalf, can it be supposed that any concession at this moment, however extensive or unqualified, will be regarded in Ireland as the offspring of a liberal policy on the part of Great Britain ?

“Ireland,” says the most popular Catholic demagogue of the present day, “never obtained the worth of a beggar’s alms from England’s generosity ; it was to the wants of England that all her concessions of right and justice are due.” He proceeds to show that in 1745 at the time of the Scotch Rebellion, in 1778 during the American War, in 1792 at the breaking out of the French War, “the Catholics of Ireland were then thought of, and a portion of their rights dealt out with a niggardly hand. Now,” says he, “a new war breaks upon us, the finances of England are tottering to ruin,” &c., and the inference of course is that this is the period when England is most likely to attend to the wishes of the Catholics of Ireland.

‘I know this argument must not be pushed too far. If it is right to make further concessions to the Catholics, we ought not to be deterred from granting them by the apprehension that they will misconstrue our motives. But at least it must be admitted that the less ground is given for such misconstruction the better.

‘For my part I have formed a sincere and strong conviction, that no arrangement will be (as some suppose) completely satisfactory to the Catholics which (having removed every distinction and disqualification on account of religious opinion from all classes of the inhabitants of Ireland) shall continue to maintain a separate Church Establishment for the religion of one-fifth of the population.’

This argument against removing Catholic disabilities, drawn from the violent conduct of the chief agitators for relief, being produced a few months later in Parliament, resulted in a personal quarrel between O’Connell and Peel. A packet of letters relating to it is thus indorsed : ‘There is among these papers not only the original correspondence as to the quarrel in 1815, but the communication made to me ten years afterwards by Mr. O’Connell, admitting that he was in the wrong.’

Undoubtedly the aggressor was O'Connell, who, with all his eloquence and earnest purpose to obtain the repeal of the Union, and to maintain the spiritual independence of his Church, combined the habit of using on most political occasions intolerably offensive language, sometimes from unrestrained passion, at other times (by his own account) from policy, in order, 'by assailing the highest in the land with the fiercest invective and the most unceremonious ridicule, to invigorate a cowering people.'<sup>4</sup> On the accession to office of a new Chief Secretary, adverse to the Catholic claims, the Liberator (as he came to be called) had not failed to pour forth sarcasms in his usual style, on Peel's origin—'squeezed out of the workings of I know not what factory in England;' on his youth—'sent over here before he had got rid of the foppery of perfumed handkerchiefs and thin shoes;' and on his official optimism, as 'one who began his parliamentary career by vindicating the gratuitous destruction of our brave soldiers in the murderous expedition to Walcheren, a lad ready to vindicate anything—everything!'

All this, and more, aimed at himself, Peel had deemed unworthy of notice. But when, as months passed on, he found the law officers, the judges, the Viceroy, the Prince Regent, each in turn reviled by the same bitter tongue, he was moved to express a hope that such language would ere long meet with fitting chastisement. And when (in 1813) O'Connell's insults to an equal had brought upon him a personal indignity, young Peel wrote with zest to his friend Croker: 'I do not know a finer subject for speculation than one which now presents itself, namely: given, a kick upon the posteriors of O'Connell by a brother counsel at Limerick, and an acquiescence in the said kick on the part of O'Connell, to determine the effect which will be produced in the Catholic Board.'

In January 1815 a coarse epithet applied by O'Connell to the Corporation of Dublin led to an attempt on the part of one of its members to horsewhip him, ending tragically in a fatal duel, to which Peel thus refers:

'Dublin Castle: Feb. 5, 1815.

'Mr. D'Esterre, the unfortunate antagonist of O'Connell, died yesterday. It is a most unhappy business, and will exasperate, I fear, party feelings and animosity, which are already, God knows, bitter enough. Mr. D'Esterre, how-

<sup>4</sup> Lecky, *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*.

ever, happens to have been the only member of the Corporation who opposed a few days since the proposal of a petition against the Catholics.'

This sad result of O'Connell's truculence is said to have caused him much remorse. It did not, however, restrain his rancour even for a time. In March he again abused the Chief Secretary in such terms that the Attorney-General advised legal proceedings. But Peel replied :

'I confess that I would rather not have my name, if I could avoid it, mixed up with a prosecution of O'Connell. The words refer, to be sure, so much to my official misdeeds that I do not think I could well have taken them up as that sort of personal attack which, after what lately passed, it would be improper to pass unnoticed in another way. But still I should be inclined to go as far as I could, consistently with my duty, to avoid a prosecution of O'Connell. And he is sufficiently factious, and treasonable, and libellous, to afford "ample space and verge enough" without making it necessary to put me forward.'

In May he had occasion to write again :

'I never read anything so infamous as O'Connell's libel on Day. He is a shabby scoundrel, to defame an Irish judge under the pretence that he is attacking a French judge. I hope his mean artifice will avail him nothing on the trial.'

In the same month, Sir Henry Parnell having presented a Catholic petition praying for relief, Mr. Peel induced the House of Commons, by a majority of eighty-one, to refuse a committee of inquiry. This he effected chiefly by dwelling on the terms demanded by the Catholic Board, an illegal body, and the temper in which they had urged their claims, quoting especially the language of O'Connell, who had denounced Grattan's measure of 1813 as 'that absurd and mischievous Bill,' and at the same time had said of the cheer that greeted its defeat—'that ruffian shout of English insolence may be the last outrage on poor, fallen,

degraded Ireland. It is an insult indelibly fixed in the mind of every Irish Catholic, never to be forgotten.'

The tone of Mr. Peel's own speech in this debate being blamed as irritating, he thus defends it :

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'May 31, 1815.

'I hope you will receive the earliest tidings of our victory of last night. I was accused of every sort of intemperance and disposition to inflame and irritate, because I ventured to refer to the proceedings and resolutions of that very body of Catholics at whose express desire the discussion originated, in order to prove this apparently not very intemperate proposition—that if you gave them less than what they demanded, or annexed securities to the grant of that which they did demand, you would not (if they themselves were to be believed) give them the least satisfaction, but the reverse.

'It is a bad cause when you are not allowed to detail the proceedings, or allude to the conduct of those who make a demand upon you, without being accused of intemperance and a desire to inflame.'

Smarting at once under the speech and under his defeat, O'Connell, at a Catholic meeting in July, intimated publicly that 'he did not think Mr. Peel would abuse him where he was present,' adding that 'he relied, not on his politeness, but on his personal prudence, a quality in which he was said to be not at all deficient.' Mr. Peel, being in France at the time, left this insult also without notice, until two months later O'Connell (waxing bolder perhaps from impunity) charged him still more pointedly with grossly traducing him under cover of parliamentary privilege, and desired the police present carefully to report his words, that 'Mr. Peel would not dare in his presence, or in any place where he was liable to personal account, to use a single expression derogatory to his integrity or his honour.'

A challenge so direct could hardly be passed over, and here the correspondence begins. Mr. Gregory, it appears, was in the country enjoying his autumn holiday, and trusting to his chief to attend to business, when he received the following letter :

*Lord Whitworth to Mr. Gregory.*

'(Private.)

'Phoenix Park: Sept. 1, 1815.

'A circumstance occurred yesterday which gave me great alarm, but from which, fortunately, nothing serious has resulted.

'In the Aggregate Meeting of Tuesday, Mr. O'Connell thought proper to say that Mr. Peel, in mentioning his name in Parliament, had done so in such terms as he would not dare avow in his presence. Anxious to repel this charge, after consulting with me and Sir C. Saxton, Peel requested the latter would immediately go to Mr. O'Connell and tell him that he did dare avow, and by him did repeat every word which he had uttered in regard to him in Parliament, and that he was ready to abide the consequences to which Mr. O'Connell naturally alluded, when he had thought proper to call upon him in so public a manner. O'Connell at first endeavoured to shuffle off on the plea of Peel's privilege, but when he was assured that Mr. Peel had expressly authorised Sir C. Saxton to renounce in his name every shadow of such a shelter, Mr. O'Connell thought fit to declare that he did not mean to follow up his threat by any further effort. So that, when Mr. Peel takes up the gauntlet which in such high and menacing terms Mr. O'Connell had thrown down, he shrinks from the consequences, and declares he will not meet him.

'I am sure you will approve of the whole of Peel's conduct. It is impossible for anyone to have conducted himself with a more scrupulously nice sense of honour than he has done; and I hope and trust it will prevent a recurrence of any such provocation in future. It evidently was an attempt at intimidation, but O'Connell mistook his man.'

*Mr. Gregory to Lord Whitworth.*

'Drumear: Sept. 3, 1815.

'Mr. Peel has acted exactly in the manner I should have expected from the opinion I entertain of his character, and everyone must approve of the course he has pursued.

‘I have no doubt his prompt and spirited conduct will prevent any similar attempt to intimidate during his continuance in office in this country. O’Connell, though he killed D’Esterre, remains the same man who was kicked by Magrath.’

A statement drawn up by Sir Charles Saxton gives more accurately what passed between him and O’Connell :

‘I observed to him that, as it was clear his speech alluded to something that had fallen from Mr. Peel in Parliament, I was empowered by Mr. Peel to say to him, that there was nothing he had ever said, or that he had seen reported as said by him, with respect to Mr. O’Connell, that he did not unequivocally avow, and for which he would not hold himself responsible.

‘As Mr. O’Connell did not offer anything directly in answer to this communication, but was proceeding to comment on Mr. Peel’s conduct on this occasion as handsome and gentlemanlike (which he subsequently repeated, with a desire that his opinion to that effect might be conveyed to Mr. Peel), I took occasion to say that I presumed Mr. Peel might expect to hear from him, in consequence of the communication he had just received.

‘His answer was, that it was certainly his feeling that a communication from him to Mr. Peel ought to follow, but that he must advise with his friends. I replied that, putting together the expressions he had then acknowledged and the communication then made to him from Mr. Peel, the conclusion was easily drawn.’

The friend consulted by O’Connell was an Irish Protestant country gentleman, Mr. Lidwill, who, after examining the question, informed Sir C. Saxton that ‘in his opinion Mr. O’Connell was not called upon by the circumstances to send a hostile message.’ The statement concludes :

‘Mr. Lidwill added a good deal of his own reasoning on the matter, which I do not consider it necessary to relate, as it did not go in the least degree to remove the conclusion, that Mr. Peel was to expect no communication from Mr. O’Connell.

‘CHARLES SAXTON.’

Mr. Lidwill’s report of the same interview, written to Mr. O’Connell, was as follows :

‘I said that the asperity of the language you had used respecting Mr. Peel, while under the impression of receiving ill

treatment from him, had been so grossly offensive, that I considered you to be the aggressor, and that I told you, if you persisted in wishing to send a hostile communication to Mr. Peel I must decline any further interference on your part, for that it would be an unjustifiable prodigality of your own life, and a wanton aggression on that of another.

‘After some little pause, Sir C. Saxton asked me if I knew what were the observations of Mr. Peel in Parliament of which you complained. I candidly acknowledged that I had not seen any report which could justify your charge on him, but that you mentioned to me, he had said, in quoting you, that it was not an ordinary individual, but one who could lead the Catholics of Ireland to his own purposes, and broadly insinuating that these purposes were dishonest. Sir Charles instantly replied, “Mr. Peel never said any such thing, nor anything which justified personality to him; he got every report he could, and no one bore any such feature; he would avow every one he saw, or anything he had said.” I agreed with him as far as I had seen the reports, and mentioned my regret at the observations you had made respecting Mr. Peel. He then apologised for trespassing so long on my time, and as he was going, I again repeated my opinion that it was not from you any hostile proceeding should come.’

Here then the quarrel might have ended. But unhappily the publication of Saxton’s statement on a Saturday evening, when it could not be answered till Monday, led to fresh insults from O’Connell, whereupon Peel promptly challenged him, and Saxton, considering his own veracity to be impugned, called out Lidwill.

*Lord Whitworth to Mr. Gregory.*

‘Phoenix Park: Sept. 4, 1815.

‘I fear Peel will not be induced to let the matter rest, and under present circumstances I think you would feel more comfortable were you on the spot. If it is not inconvenient, I would wish you to come up.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘(Most private.)

‘Dublin: Sept. 5, 1815.

‘I am very sorry to be compelled to interrupt your holidays, but as I am going to leave Dublin for Ostend, for

what purpose you can easily guess, I am afraid I must solicit your immediate return.

‘As perhaps you have not heard from other quarters what has passed yesterday and this morning, I may as well give you a minute of office, as Sir Edward [Littlehales] says. Last night, on the appearance of the “Dublin Chronicle” containing Mr. O’Connell’s letter, I sent him, through Colonel Brown,<sup>5</sup> a letter to this effect:

“Sir,—Having seen in a newspaper of this evening a letter bearing your signature, imputing to me ‘a paltry trick,’ and concluding with the expression of your regret that I have ‘ultimately preferred a paper war,’ I have to request that you will appoint a friend, who may make with Colonel Brown, the bearer of this letter, such arrangements as the case requires. I am, Sir, &c. &c. ROBERT PEEL.”

‘This was delivered at half-past six last night by Brown. Mr. O’Connell said he should hear from Mr. Lidwill that evening. I came to town, slept at the Castle, and about five was awakened by my servant informing me that the Sheriff was below, that he had been to the Park, &c. I sent word I could not see him, but desired him to call at nine. He behaved uncommonly well and went off, and I, of course, prepared to decamp. I met Ottley on the stairs, who was coming to give me notice of the Sheriff’s pursuit, and came with him to his house. I desired Brown to send a strongish note to Mr. O’Connell, complaining of his delay in sending an answer. He wrote to Brown a reply that “the delay was occasioned by his being in arrest, an arrest the more painful to his feelings as it was caused by Mrs. O’Connell having given notice to the Sheriff, she being alarmed by the publications in the papers.” I remained at Ottley’s all day, and a few minutes since saw Brown, who informed me that a Mr. Bennett had called on him, offering to go to Ostend. Brown said he was authorised by me to go anywhere, and settled the matter accordingly. Say nothing about all this, as we are bound by the engagement to keep the place &c. as secret as we can, consistently

<sup>5</sup> Deputy Quartermaster-General of Ireland.



with our convenience. Of course, it is necessary that I should inform you. It is much better to go to Ostend than to be, in any event, knocked on the head<sup>6</sup> in the county of Kildare, which "ought" to be the place, in Mr. O'Connell's opinion.'

' Maidstone: Sept. 11, 1815.

' You will have no scruple in acting upon everything of a public nature that occurs, without reference to me, and you may be quite sure of my approbation. Thank you for the papers, and for Desart's letter, and the excellent advice from my anonymous friend. Lidwill's statement is perfect. What a blockhead he must be! What has the public to do with him or his daughter?'

Desart's is an affectionate letter, expressing his opinion that Peel was 'completely in the right, both as to courage and conduct,' and the pleasure it would give him, 'though it may appear rather an odd phrase to use on such an occasion,' to repair to Dublin to act as his friend. The 'anonymous friend' is an expert who writes warning Mr. Peel of the tricks often practised in Ireland to get an advantage in duels. The remark on Lidwill refers to the peroration of a published letter from him to O'Connell:

' I go to the Continent in your quarrel, for I have none of my own. I go under the heartrending circumstances of being obliged to put to the test the fortitude of a dearly beloved and affectionate child, in a delicate state of health, and whose only surviving parent I am, by confiding to her the truth to save her from the torture of doubt. But I go on behalf of a country in which I have drawn my first breath, I go for a people the more endeared to me by their misfortunes, and for a cause to which my last words shall bear evidence of my fidelity.'

Mr. Lidwill's view of the quarrel as international was largely adopted by the Irish press. Extracts kept by Mr. Peel from the 'Dublin Chronicle' reveal a side of the question little represented in his own letters or in those of his friends.

' Who does not see that the entire quarrel is that of public men? English placemen on one side, the favourites of Ireland on the other, patrons of Orangemen against the advocates of religious freedom, the hirelings of an iron rule seeking the lives

<sup>6</sup> By O'Connell's friends, if not shot by O'Connell.

of the champions of Ireland, and indeed for the second time the life of Mr. O'Connell.

'We have observed the pomp and strut with which the "Correspondent," "Patriot," and morning prints of Dublin (all equally corrupt, though of various hues) announced the departure for Holyhead of Mr. Peel, Colonel Brown, Sir Charles Saxton and a Mr. Dickenson [Saxton's friend]. All Englishmen, all placemen, all feeding upon Irish salaries, lodged in Irish mansions, emerged from humble conditions at home to wealth and rank obtained from poor Ireland.

'These are the four champions of the Castle. Can it be believed for a moment that a mere personal difference, a private quarrel, can have arisen between such persons and Mr. Lidwill, Mr. O'Connell, and their friends? The one class belonging to the relentless foes of Ireland, the other to her ardent and resolute protectors. What can have brought into conflict such men but the cause of Ireland alone?

'The world is at a loss to conjecture upon what grounds Sir Charles Saxton could call upon Mr. Lidwill. He published what he must have considered a satisfactory explanation, or why did he publish it? Mr. Lidwill offers no subsequent aggression, and yet he is called out after the explanation.

'This gentleman's lovely children remain at Kearns' Hotel. They have seen no visitors since their inestimable parent sailed on Sunday evening.'

Peel's friends, on the other hand, were mostly of opinion that the quarrel had been forced upon him.

*Mr. William Peel to Mr. Peel.*

Drayton: Sept. 3, 1815.

'It was not more than an hour before I received your letter that I was engaged in a conversation about political disputes, and I then said that I was convinced, from the opinion I entertained of your courage, that you were the last person in the world who would suffer any reflections on your conduct to pass unnoticed. Your communication only satisfies me that I had formed a just notion of you. I think you have done perhaps more than was required of you. At the same time I am glad you have acted as you did—if there is a fault, it is on the right side. I sincerely trust the matter is at rest—indeed, I do not quite see the necessity of

Sir Charles Saxton's inserting the affair in the public prints. I think it had terminated in a very creditable manner to you. Why therefore renew the subject? I hope to God it may not have that effect.'

*The Attorney-General (Saurin) to Mr. Gregory.*

'Sept. 9, 1815.

'I can hardly express how much I have been annoyed—indeed, my very life embittered—by the unhappy situation into which those two excellent fellows Peel and Saxton have been dragged by the two very worst miscreants in the country. Considering Peel's early time of life, and the repetition of the very galling insolence of O'Connell, it is perhaps too much to say that Peel should have treated it with contempt. But no doubt can be entertained that if he was right in noticing it, in every step that he has taken since, he has been what he always will be, the pure and faithful gentleman. Whether he shall live or die, his honour will be unsullied.'

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'Sept. 12, 1815.

'I find everybody fully of opinion that you have acted not only with spirit but with temper and prudence. Believe me, my dear Peel, that you are a subject of very general anxiety, and that the good wishes and prayers of thousands who know you only by name are in your favour. For us all, you know how we love you.'

*Lord Whitworth to Mr. Peel.*

'Phoenix Park: Sept. 14, 1815.

'It is, my dear Peel, with great satisfaction that I assure you that your conduct in this unfortunate business is entirely approved of by Lord Liverpool and Lord Sidmouth.

'They both consider it as truly unfortunate, but unavoidable, and both speak of you in terms of the greatest affection. Heaven bless you and protect you, my dear Peel, and may

we soon have the happiness of seeing you here again ! The Duchess, whose hearty prayers are with you, desires to be most affectionately remembered.'

*The Lord Chancellor (Manners) to Mr. Peel.*

'Sept. 16, 1815.

'I have been excessively anxious and vexed on this occurrence between you and Mr. O'Connell. There is nothing more embarrassing than what is called an affair of honour between a gentleman and a blackguard. But it ought to be satisfactory to you, as it is to all your friends, that nothing has been left undone on your part that belongs to the feelings and character of a man of high spirit and honour.'

While hostile Irish newspapers denounced the Chief Secretary's conduct as 'murderous' and 'unchristian,' two of his friends also condemned the challenge as a sin. One of them, (anonymous) employed the *argumentum ad hominem*, 'When you wished to give the highest encomium to the virtuous and lamented Perceval, it was, that you firmly believed no consideration could have tempted him to fight. Oh, why be so sensible of such excellence in another, and not practise it yourself?'

The other friend, a young member of Parliament of strong religious convictions, afterwards one of the founders of the Irvingite Church, wrote :

'Bath : Sept. 8, 1815.

'My dear Peel,—I cannot tell you how much and upon how many grounds I have been pained at reading in the newspapers the attempts that have been made to assassinate you in Ireland.

'You are placed by the Almighty over a country where drunkenness and murder seem necessary ingredients in any one that is to be allowed to breathe its hateful air. Oh, why will you and its other rulers not be brave, and "vindicate the ways of God to man" ?

'As you value your eternal life, do not rush into the presence of God by your own act, which it will be if you run your breast against the pistol of a licensed assassin. I wish with all my heart that the sneers and abuse, non-

sense and blasphemy, of these murderers could fall on me, so that your life should be spared.

‘It is arrant cowardice to man, contempt of God, and hardy defiance which can receive no mercy, in every man that goes out to fight a duel, be he who he may.

‘With the sincerest and most earnest love for your temporal and eternal life, believe me,

‘My dear Peel,

‘Your very faithful Friend,

‘HENRY DRUMMOND.’

From Mr. Peel’s brother-in-law, afterwards Dean of York came a milder and more persuasive remonstrance :

‘Drayton : Sept. 13, 1815.

‘My dear Robert,—The anxiety which we all experience here will plead my excuse for troubling you on the occasion of your quarrel with Mr. O’Connell. It has been reported that his present second intends to recommend an apology to be proposed to you. In that case, and in that case only, I presume to offer you advice.

‘His friends have very properly declared that nothing which you said in Parliament authorised an hostile message from him to you. Your friends have with equal propriety conceded that because he said that “you did not dare to say anything injurious to his honour” (which every man has a right to say of every man), there was no necessity for you to call him out. So far, well. But now you have challenged him for writing that you had recourse to “a paltry trick,” in publishing on Saturday instead of Monday, and that you “had preferred a paper war.”

‘Such immaterial trumpery expressions, which are the sole matters now between you, used too in the heat of the moment, are hardly worthy of the trouble and distress which they have already occasioned. But surely, my dear Robert, the slightest apology, the most simple explanation which shall rob them of their coarseness, must be a sufficient excuse. Let me trust, then, that if in a manly direct manner an apology is proposed, such as a gentleman is allowed to

make and a gentleman is allowed to receive, I say, if such be proposed to you, let me trust that you will be much superior to the vanity of a little mind, which might seek triumph and gratification in the humiliation of an opponent.

‘You and he are not solitary individuals without near and dear connexions. If either fall, the misery will be widely felt. Let not then such calamitous results be produced by the mere balance of a straw, or the nice explanation of a word.

‘Yours, ever affectionately,

‘WILLIAM COCKBURN.’

It was too late. The challenge had been accepted, and before this letter reached Peel he had slipped quietly through Wales and England to Ostend, where Irish imagination pictured him, ‘for seven clear days, swaggering on the battle-field, and practising at an ace of hearts.’ O’Connell followed at his leisure, first conducting his family to their home in Kerry. As he passed thence, ‘along the fine quay of Waterford,’ says an enthusiastic admirer, ‘with hundreds crowding round him, to steal a glance at the pillar of their hopes, never did conscious rectitude appear more strongly in the human countenance, never did more real courage shine on the whole front, than glowed through this child of Ireland and his companions.’

But in vain did the four would-be combatants thus seek to effect a hostile meeting beyond the bounds of Irish jurisdiction. The notoriety of their intentions for a full fortnight beforehand had imposed upon the civil authorities (to say nothing of private friends) the duty of preventing bloodshed, and in passing through London, Lidwill first was captured, and bound over to keep the peace. Three days later, O’Connell, before daybreak, in the Strand, when about to step into his chaise for Dover, found himself (says the ‘Dublin Chronicle’) ‘surrounded by an immense crowd of policemen, who seemed to consider that they had made as great a prize as if they had taken the Emperor Napoleon in the plenitude of his greatness.’

*Sir Charles Saxton to Mr. Peel.*

‘Calais: Sept. 19, 1815.

‘A letter from Croker announces that Lidwill was in the hands of the police; that O’Connell (accompanied by

his brother, a surgeon, and Mr. Bennett) sailed from Waterford for Milford on the 13th; that the police were also on the look-out for O'Connell.

'I regret the failure of Manton's promise. Should L. arrive in the course of to-morrow, I shall endeavour to hasten the crisis, that you may have the choice [of pistols] of which I regret to feel that a consideration for me may possibly have deprived you. If anything should occur before I see you, I trust that right will prosper. So God bless you.

' 10 P.M.—My cock won't fight, I think, though he has contrived that it shall appear he can't. Prittie<sup>7</sup> brings word that Lord Ellenborough has bound Lidwill over to keep the peace in the United Kingdom, and not to leave it till the first day of Michaelmas term. I look forward to the same issue of O'Connell's excursion from Waterford. A second journey to the Continent, in November, is but a dreary prospect. It seems, however, at present to be the only one that promises a conclusion to my volume of Lidwilliana. I send the pistols by the courier charged with this letter.'

Meanwhile, Peel's colleagues in Ireland were enforcing the Insurrection Act, which he had meant if possible to keep in reserve. They were also growing anxious about his private intentions as to preservation of the peace.

*Mr. Gregory to Mr. Peel.*

' Sept. 25, 1815.

'Since your departure the outrages in Tipperary and Limerick have assumed a very serious aspect, and it has been thought necessary to put in force the Insurrection Act and send into those counties upwards of nine thousand troops. It would have been desirable that this measure should have been postponed until your return, but your return was uncertain, and the danger was pressing; I therefore trust you will approve.'

' Sept. 29.—Why all this secrecy of your movements?

<sup>7</sup> M.P. for Tipperary, Lidwill's second.

Why these endeavours to escape being put under restraint in England? Is not the whole transaction at an end? Have you not acquitted yourself in a manner most gratifying to your private friends, and to every gentleman in the Empire? If you attempt doing more, a bad construction may be put upon it. I write my impressions freely, and without scruple, according to the bounden duty of a friend. I do this with the more confidence as Lord Whitworth perfectly coincides with me, and thinks upon every principle of propriety the matter should rest where it is, and not be stirred by you.'

A fortnight later Mr. Robinson also wrote :

'Oct. 6, 1815.

'I most anxiously hope that there is no truth in reports which are going about of your resignation. I am persuaded you could not do a more imprudent thing, or one which would give so much an air of triumph to those scoundrels. Pray excuse this advice. You will, I am sure, receive it from me at least as a proof that I am not indifferent to what concerns you.'

By this time Mr. Peel was at his work again, writing to the Home Secretary that 'the effect produced among the lower orders by the summary convictions under the Insurrection Act and the immediate execution of the sentences of transportation has been very great,' and to the Lord Chancellor :

'Phœnix Park: Oct. 9, 1815.

'I cannot tell you how much gratified I was by learning from your kind letter, which has been following me from place to place, that my conduct in the affair with Mr. O'Connell met with your approbation. I am sure there is no one better qualified to pronounce upon the steps which it becomes a gentleman to take under such circumstances than yourself. I have not the remotest thought of resigning my office, so far from it that if I had had any previous intention of doing so, I should certainly have postponed the execution of it.'



In November, Saxton and Lidwill met near Calais. Saxton missed Lidwill, and Lidwill fired in the air, partly (as he explained in a speech on the field) in deference to the legal restrictions laid on him, partly from regard for the solicitude of his adversary's mother. Peel also, in pursuit of reparation for offensive comments upon his conduct by Mr. Lidwill, made what an Irish correspondent, Lord Clonmell, terms 'a poaching expedition into Saxton's preserve.' His friend Croker had in vain written :

'I implore you not to leave Ireland till you shall have learned the result of Saxton's affair. Several probable events might render your doing so either ridiculous or wrong ; for instance, a wound from Saxton, or death. To your sending the retainer I have no objection, but for God's sake do not commit yourself so long beforehand by leaving Ireland. That you can do as well at any time, when it may become certainly necessary.'

Mr. Peel had already undertaken the second journey to the Continent, only to find that Lidwill refused to enter into explanations, and Colonel Brown pronounced it impossible to insist on fighting one who had shown that he would not return the fire. The meeting with O'Connell also being postponed indefinitely, till he should find himself more free, the general public, tired of waiting for some tragical result, began to indulge, as Croker had foreseen, in copious ridicule of all the *dramatis personæ*, causing to one of Mr. Peel's sensitive temper considerable vexation.

*Mr. Peel to the Earl of Desart.*

'Dublin Castle : Dec. 20, 1815.

'If I had rascals who will fight to deal with, I should be much better pleased than in being concerned with rascals who will not fight.

'Lidwill said to Brown, "God forbid that I should intend offence to Mr. Peel. Mr. Peel little knows the manner in which I have behaved to him. All the correspondence which he had respecting Sir Charles Saxton's return for Cashel was brought to me, but I spurned the offer of making use of it for his exposure."

'Now the only letter which I ever wrote was one which I should not have the slightest objection to publish in the streets, as it was only a letter of introduction.

‘I am no doubt annoyed at my name being mixed up in cursed publications and rejoinders and statements with the names of two men that I believe to be cowardly liars. I should be miserable if I were not supported by a consciousness that I have acted throughout in a straightforward manner, and with as good a will to meet both my adversaries as it was possible to entertain.

‘At the first opening of the business I was persuaded that it was more becoming to my station to take a course which should make it necessary for O’Connell to challenge me, than to challenge him. He said I had grossly traduced him. I certainly thought if I avowed every newspaper report, the least he could have done would have been to have required to know from me what I had said of him. To this I should have answered that it was too late to put that question, and he would have called on me. Instead of that, he and his friend merely offer new insults, and I, after travelling above two thousand miles, have merely succeeded in proving that they are a couple of cowards.

‘What shall I say to Lidwill? indeed what can I say while he pleads restriction? O’Connell is to let me know when he is at liberty.’

Thus the affair of honour remained still on hand. In 1817 it was thought necessary again to bind over both parties to keep the peace, and it was not till 1825 that O’Connell took steps to wind up the affair by acknowledging himself to have been in the wrong.

*Colonel Brown to Mr. Peel.*

‘Dublin: Sunday, April 24, 1825.

‘I was this morning much surprised by a visit from Mr. Bennett, and at first felt some difficulty in receiving any communication from him relating to yourself, but as he developed what he had to say I saw no ground to object to being the channel of the inclosed apology from Mr. O’Connell.’

(*Inclosure.*)

'April 24, 1825.

'Mr. Bennett called upon Colonel Brown from Mr. O'Connell, and alluding to a transaction which occurred in the year 1815, and was then closed, stated that Mr. O'Connell was now desirous to convey to Mr. Peel the expression of his conviction that in what then took place he was in error, in the first instance in the observations he made on Mr. Peel's speech in Parliament, and in the subsequent comments; and that it would be a satisfaction to Mr. O'Connell's mind that this communication should reach Mr. Peel in such manner as may be most acceptable to him, which he entrusts to the discretion of Colonel Brown.'

*Mr. Peel to Colonel Brown.*

'Whitehall: April 28, 1825.

'I inclose a letter which you may either send to or read to Mr. Bennett, as may be most convenient to you; I shall not make any communication upon the subject, direct or indirect, to Mr. O'Connell, who, as you probably know, is in London.'

(*Inclosure.*)

'Whitehall: April 29, 1825.

'I am much obliged to you for having sent to me the memorandum of your conversation with Mr. Bennett. I thought little of the comments made by Mr. O'Connell upon my speech in Parliament as compared with other parts of the transaction of which they were the original cause. The years that have now elapsed since it took place, and the consciousness that I did everything in my power to procure honourable reparation, had almost effaced it from my memory. At any rate, they had removed all feelings of personal hostility and resentment, to which a deep sense of injury might at first have given rise. Had any such feelings survived, the intention of Mr. O'Connell in making the communication which he has recently made could not have failed completely to have extinguished them.'

*Colonel Brown to Mr. Peel.*

‘Dublin: May 3, 1825.

‘I have received your letters, and as you permitted, I read one of them to Mr. Bennett; he requested to be allowed to take a copy for Mr. O’Connell, to whose mind, he said, it will be a great relief. Although I sent you the exact words of Mr. Bennett’s communication you must bear in mind that he then assured me, and yesterday again repeated, that Mr. O’Connell had desired him to leave it to my discretion to make his apology acceptable to you. And, without entering into the motives which induced Mr. O’Connell to make the communication, I think it can only be considered as evidence of his desire to make a full and satisfactory reparation to you.’

One could wish that these were the last words, but to explain Peel’s later bearing towards O’Connell in later years it is necessary to append a note endorsed upon the papers.

‘Some time after the communication made by Mr. Bennett in 1825 it got wind in Ireland, and Mr. O’Connell was taunted with having “crouched” to me. I think that was the expression. His answer was that he had made the apology in the hope that it might possibly propitiate me on the Catholic question then pending in Parliament. His defence of his voluntary apology was to that effect, but no doubt it will be found in the newspapers of the time.

‘I had given him credit for having made the tardy reparation purely from a conscientious feeling that it was due.

‘R. P.’

## CHAPTER VII.

1816.

Peace without Prosperity—Insurrection Act reserved for Emergencies—Enforced in four Counties—Parliamentary Impatience of Taxation—Effects in Ireland—Retrenchment and Reforms—Proposed Inquiry—Magistrates and Sheriffs—Catholics divided—Protestants disheartened—Peel on the Choice of his Successor—Chief Secretary and Lord Lieutenant—Remedial Policy—England agitated, Ireland tranquil—Preparing for Famine.

PEACE after the long war in Europe did not bring at first prosperity. The lavish outlay of belligerent nations for food, clothes, arms, pay, transport, ceased, the load of debt remained. Prices, and with prices wages, fell. Farmers, tradesmen, manufacturers, made no profits; rent rolls shrank; land lay untilled; coal mines and factories suspended work. Disbanded soldiers swelled the ranks of the unemployed. Pauperism increased; distress and discontent were general; hungry rioters burned stacks and broke machines; insurgents plotted revolution.

In Ireland, long familiar with political troubles, there was less excitement than in England, but not less suffering. The winter of 1815–16 was marked by outbreaks of crime, arising in some bad cases from combination among the peasantry to avenge themselves on anyone paying what they deemed too high a rent for land. From several counties applications were made for proclamation of disturbed districts. But this in general Mr. Peel steadily discouraged, advising the magistrates to have recourse rather to an efficient police.

*Mr. Peel to James Daly, Esq.*

‘Dublin Castle: Jan. 18, 1816.

‘I have no hesitation in giving a decided opinion against an application for the Insurrection Act. We are determined to reserve this strongest and last remedy for occasions of

great emergency. Additional troops shall be sent, though there will be difficulty in withdrawing them from other quarters. Depend upon it, however, that nothing will be half so effectual as an active stipendiary magistrate patrolling by night with thirty or forty mounted constables, and occupied by day in detecting, and preparing evidence for the trial of offenders. The Insurrection Act itself would not be half so useful.

‘It would be much easier for us to enforce the Insurrection Act than to reinforce the troops. But I am in favour of the latter measure, first because I cannot think that the barony of Longford is in a state to justify the Government in suspending the Constitution; and secondly, because I doubt whether the peace of the county would be much promoted by it. I write to you, of course, in the most unreserved confidence.’

In four counties, however, the Insurrection Act had been applied, and had been found effective. The young Chief Secretary did not shrink from punishing all those found guilty. ‘Misplaced mercy,’ he wrote, ‘is, in fact, nothing else in its consequences but rigour and injustice.’ Appreciating the courage of Irish conspirators, and their fidelity to illegal oaths, he deplored the general indifference to perjury and complicity in crime.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘Jan. 24, 1816.

‘Our accounts from the proclaimed districts in Westmeath and Limerick are as satisfactory as we could wish. In Tipperary we are at this moment, in addition to all the transportations under the Insurrection Act, making a terrible but necessary example under the special commission we have sent there. There have been thirteen capital convictions for offences amounting to little short of rebellion, and fourteen sentenced to transportation for the destruction of a barrack.

‘All the sentences will be carried into execution without mitigation. We find convictions attended with so many difficulties that we are obliged to be very sparing in the

extension of mercy. Such is the extent of the conspiracy that pervades that unhappy county, and such the utter disregard of perjury, that the leader in the destruction of a barrack produced twenty witnesses in his defence, some of them men of property, who perjured themselves in the grossest manner. The guilt of the prisoner was, however, afterwards completely established by the confession of his fourteen associates, who after his conviction consented to plead guilty on condition that they should not be executed.

‘You can have no idea of the moral depravation of the lower orders in that county. In fidelity towards each other they are unexampled, as they are in their sanguinary disposition and fearlessness of the consequences of indulging it.’

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

‘Fife House: Jan. 28, 1816.

‘I am happy to find that you have been so successful in your convictions under the special commission. Though it is dreadful to think of so many executions as must take place in consequence, yet I am thoroughly persuaded there is no chance of peace for the country except by so extensive an example as cannot fail to strike terror into the minds of the disaffected. It is lamentable to reflect that the glory and success of the country, and the total discomfiture of our enemy on the Continent, should not have had a sensible effect on the lower classes of the people of Ireland.

‘In truth, Ireland is a political phenomenon—not influenced by the same feelings as appear to affect mankind in other countries—and the singular nature of the disorder must be the cause why it has hitherto been found impracticable to apply an effectual and permanent remedy.’

Early in February Mr. Peel left Dublin for London, and as usual kept his Irish colleagues informed of all that passed there concerning Ireland. In the correspondence at this time nothing is more striking than the marked effect of parliamentary criticism on the counsels of the Irish Government, tending to the reform

of old abuses, especially of those entailing pecuniary burdens. The fall of rents had enforced economy on classes influential in the House of Commons, and together with the widespread general distress had provoked what Lord Castlereagh called 'ignorant impatience for relaxation of taxation.' Ignorant or not, it was irresistible, and made itself felt nowhere more powerfully than in Ireland. The pressure was transmitted through the Chief Secretary, and the contrast is remarkable between his quick perception of the necessity for retrenchment and the grotesque extravagance of the financial proposals sent from Ireland. In place of reductions in respect of peace, the military department there had prepared increased estimates, without one word of notice to the minister chiefly responsible.

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. Littlehales.*

Feb. 13, 1816.

'I must ask your immediate and serious attention to the Irish military estimates, from which I foresee great trouble and great embarrassment. It seems you have sent over an estimate for 63,474 men! And Vansittart told the House last night that 25,000 is to be the establishment, and no part of his speech excited more surprise. I believe we shall require more than 25,000, surprising as it may seem, but it was absurd ever to think of 63,000.

'What can be the reason for voting in 1815 under the head of "Privates' lodging allowance and stabling for the cavalry," 3,553*l.*, and in 1816 under the same head 10,290*l.*? This estimate has been sent over to Palmerston. Not only no explanation has been sent to me, but not even a copy of it. Fortunately it was utterly unintelligible, and he sent to me to explain it, which I was incapable of doing. It was to have been presented and printed to-day, but I entreated him not to expose us to the disgrace of printing an estimate for 1816 the second item of which was treble the estimate of 1815.

'What can be the meaning of "Signal station expenses 5,000*l.*?" Why is it double the vote of last year? If I am not mistaken, the signal stations are to be abandoned; but suppose they were not, why is the vote to be doubled?



‘I am really harassed and annoyed by going through these items, but they are all equally inexplicable. Suppose these estimates had been presented, and I had been asked about them, what answer have you enabled me to give? I must beg of you to examine these items, and not to trust to General Freeman.

‘As to the Barrack estimate, I can hardly mention it with patience. And the Yeomanry, is it not possible to put off the clothing for another year? They really do so little that it is immaterial how they are clothed. Their arms are given them more for their own protection than the protection of the State. The attempt to new-clothe them may lead to their final abolition. The tide sets very very strong in favour of reduction and economy.’

‘*Feb.* 16.—The Volunteers of Ireland are charged this year to the public at much more than double the amount of the Volunteers of Great Britain. It is very well to arm and organise the Protestants of Ireland for their own defence, but they can beat off a carding party as well in old red coats as in new ones.’

‘*Feb.* 22.—I cannot let the express depart without thanking you for the very valuable information you have sent me, and the reductions you have been able to effect. The information is just what I wanted, and relieves me from all anxiety.’

‘*Feb.* 23.—I have not accepted the offered reduction of 2,000*l.* in the Medical Board estimates, being perfectly satisfied, from the character of those who preside at it, that no exhortations to economy are needed there.’

As the best means of enforcing retrenchment, the House of Commons refused to continue in time of peace taxes voted in time of war. The property tax of two shillings in the pound had produced more than fourteen millions a year, the war malt tax towards three millions. Both these taxes, on account of the enormous expenditure caused by Napoleon’s ‘hundred days,’ the Government now proposed to renew for a time, the property tax only at one shilling, but from the first there were ominous symptoms of resistance.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘ Feb. 27, 1816.

‘The property tax comes on on Friday, and will be the toughest battle of the session. My father, who is a very staunch friend of Government in general, seems not very steady on the property tax. Probably he will not vote at all. Every expedient has been tried, and not without success, to raise the country against it.’

In the mean time Mr. Peel, having obtained from the Commander-in-Chief the necessary information, made a long and convincing speech in support of his reduced estimates.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘ Feb. 28.—I took an opportunity last night of explaining the grounds on which 25,000 men were necessary in Ireland.

‘I thought it better to tell the truth, and not let the English members remain in the gross ignorance in which they are of the internal state of Ireland. It is really fit that they should know a little better than they do the difference between England and Ireland. I determined, therefore, that the advantage of an explicit and candid statement would counterbalance the partial inconvenience which may arise from an exposure of our real situation. I thought it a good opportunity to enter into our domestic military policy, if I may so call it, and I really believe not one single man in the House will object to the proposed establishment. Sir John Newport was the only Irishman who spoke (except that mountebank Sir F. Flood), and he perfectly concurred with me as to the necessity.

‘If you should think that I was too candid in portraying our disturbances and in exhibiting our weakness, I must beg you to recollect the inconveniences to which we must submit, on the other hand, if the truth be not told, and if we are to have laws made by Englishmen on the presumption that because they are well fitted for England they are equally applicable to Ireland.’

*Mr. Peel to Sir George Hewett.*

‘ Feb. 29, 1816.

‘ I feel very very much indebted for the kindness and readiness with which you complied with my earnest and necessary request for your assistance in enabling me to justify the proposed Peace Establishment for Ireland. The information you sent me was very valuable and very complete, and in consequence of the statement which it enabled me to make, not a single individual has expressed a doubt of the necessity of at least the establishment proposed.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘ Feb. 29, 1816.

‘ My only object in requesting a rigorous examination of the several estimates is this—not to curtail proper and necessary expenditure, but, foreseeing as I do the most minute examination and inquiry, to be enabled completely and satisfactorily to vindicate every questioned item.

‘ The cry for economy is perhaps carried to an unreasonable extent, but you can scarcely conceive the extent to which among our own friends it is carried. They will not object, and a great majority will not object, to what is reasonable, but they will require, with much more minuteness than ever they required before, account and proof.

‘ I tremble for the proclamations,<sup>1</sup> and one of my reasons for telling so much truth the other night was to prepare Englishmen for some pecuniary demands which in England they would think unnecessary. I know perfectly well that I drew the state of Ireland in faint colours. I said nothing of the universal disaffection of the lower orders, and the mischievous spirit with which it is kept up by those who have influence over them. But I told truth enough to alarm many an honest Englishman, and convince him that he knows about as much of the state of Ireland as he does of the state of Kamschatka.

‘ What do you think of Vansittart telling the House that

<sup>1</sup> Under the name of publishing proclamations the Irish Government largely subsidised the press.

Ireland would provide three millions this year, without saying a word to Fitzgerald [Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer], who would have told him that she could no more raise by taxation one million than ten thousand millions?'

'*March 2.*—I am afraid we have little hope of carrying the property tax. The Irish members begin to rat.'

In his zeal to cut down one of the worst sinecures, Mr. Peel showed a disposition to appeal from the Home Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the House of Commons.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Sidmouth.*

'*March 15, 1816.*

'I wish you would speak to Lord Liverpool and Lord Castlereagh before you decide that the question of the Clerk of the Pleas office should be left to the tardy decision of a court of law. Foster says that the abuses discovered in the office are enormous, that the amount of fees exacted from the suitors is not less than 30,000*l.* per annum, of which the principal clerk did not receive more than one-third; a Mr. Pollock, the first deputy, is in the receipt of eight or nine thousand a year as his own share of the profits; other deputies and persons unnecessarily employed have profits amounting to twelve or fourteen hundred a year each. Foster thinks that every possible difficulty will be thrown in the way of an early decision in the Irish Courts, and then there is an appeal to the House of Lords. In the mean time, the Chief Baron<sup>2</sup> is receiving the enormous profits arising from these enormous abuses. I think you will find the House of Commons indisposed to permit the delay to intervene.'

At the same time an inclination was shown in both Houses of Parliament towards a general inquiry into the state of Ireland. This Mr. Peel was determined to resist, but he found it prudent to concede a limited investigation.

<sup>2</sup> The Chief Baron, with doubtful right, had hastened to appoint his son.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘ Irish Office : March 11, 1816.

‘ Sir John Newport has given notice of a motion for an inquiry into the state of Ireland, and I shall be very glad to receive your opinion and advice upon it. From a vague and general and undefined inquiry no possible good can result. The great feature (to borrow a word from Lord Castlereagh) of our domestic politics is the Catholic question. This we have been inquiring into for the last eight or ten years, until we are heartily tired of it. No progress has been made; the House and the country are divided upon it, and how could a Select Committee of twenty-one persons hope to reconcile the difference? Other questions of a general nature—Tithes, Finance, Education—have been already inquired into. I dare say the voluminous reports on the two latter have never been read. But where is the use of further inquiry if members will neglect the means they already have of informing themselves?

‘ I was strongly disposed to resist the motion altogether, but a thought occurred to me this morning as I walked down here, which I throw out for your consideration.

‘ Might not some good result from an inquiry into the causes and progress of the disorders which have led to the application of the Insurrection Act in Tipperary, Westmeath, King’s County, and Limerick? Here would be a definite inquiry with a specific object. These counties would present a specimen of the state of Ireland. The disturbances there have not originated in party politics or dissensions. The minds of all good men are made up as to the necessity of putting a stop to them, and the hopelessness of any other immediate remedies than force. I know of no disclosures that we need fear, nor of any other discoveries that can be made, than that we have acted upon the general feeling of the loyal and respectable portion of the community, have followed (in some cases reluctantly) their demands for rigour and coercion, and have administered justice with the utmost impartiality.

The cause of the rebels is so decidedly a bad one, so little justification can be found for them, the exposure of the iniquities and atrocities must be so complete, they must be shown to be so unprovoked by any act of Government, that a full exposure might possibly be of service both in England and Ireland.

‘Pray turn all this in your mind. There might be some ground for cavil and suspicion if, after such manifest proof of disturbance as six or seven proclamations under the Insurrection Act afford, we rejected all inquiry.’

‘*March 13.*—As if we had not debate enough in the House of Commons, I went last night and attended the debate in the House of Lords. It was on the Duke of Bedford’s motion for inquiring into the state of the country. Ireland formed a prominent part.’

‘Lord Limerick thought fit to make a most shameful speech, full of irritation. I told him I thought it was worse than Judge Fletcher’s charge. All except Lord Holland and Lord Buckingham &c. were disgusted with it. The Duke of Bedford spoke of both of us with a liberality that shows that he does not wish to make Ireland worse than she is, by making her the arena of political squabbles.

‘It would be gratifying to you to hear the terms in which your conduct in the Government is spoken of by all men of all political parties. Everyone admits that whatever may be the misfortunes of Ireland, none of them are attributable to you; on the contrary, that everything has been done by you that could be wished or hoped for.

‘I have had a conversation with Lord Liverpool this morning. I asked him whether he had turned his thoughts towards selecting your successor. He said that he had not, hinted at a strong wish that you should remain another year, but confessed that after the engagement made to you on your assumption of the Government he should have a difficulty in proposing it. I said little or nothing on the subject, save that it is my wish to retire from the scene with you.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘ March 15, 1816.

‘ People in Ireland are very ignorant of the difficulties of managing business in the House of Commons. They think it very wrong for a certain description of persons to meddle with Irish affairs. It may be so, but who is to prevent it ?

‘ I believe an honest despotic Government would be by far the fittest Government for Ireland. But while you have any deliberative assembly, in which every member is at liberty to bring every subject under consideration, how are you to deal with such a body ? You must discuss the question. It is in vain to say, “ This is a delicate subject, and does not bear discussion.” A loud laugh would be the answer to such an argument. Look at every night’s debate in the House, and, still more, hear every night’s debate. See with what rigour and unrelenting scrutiny every paltry increase to an officer’s salary in England is inquired into, every guard at the door of a theatre or an exhibition investigated and abused, or rather condemned without investigation, and then judge of the trouble of managing Irish affairs in such an assembly, and of the absurdity of supposing that you can withdraw them from notice and discussion.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘ March 18, 1816.

‘ I quite agree with you as to the policy of resisting Sir John Newport’s motion. The question is whether, with a view to fortify our resistance against his speculative inquiry, it might not be politic to offer a limited inquiry. Some management may be necessary where the House of Commons is concerned. Many people may argue thus (people very well disposed): “ We acquit the Irish Government of all blame, but since the battle of Waterloo they have enforced the Insurrection Act in four counties, and have required a much larger force for Ireland than for Great Britain, and it is not unreasonable to know something of the extent of the disturbance which evidently prevails.” ’

‘*March 19.*—We were beat last night on the Property Tax by a majority of no less than thirty-seven. This is rather alarming. I am afraid we shall find the House of Commons a very unmanageable body on some other questions—Civil List, Malt Tax, &c.’

‘*March 20.*—The Cabinet have just determined to abandon altogether Vansittart’s plan of raising the supplies within the year by taxation. The War Malt Tax is to be given up, for this good reason—that the Cabinet is afraid of being beat upon it, as they were upon the Property Tax. The withdrawal of the Malt Tax in England necessitates its withdrawal in Ireland. What is to be done I know not. The finances are, I fear, in a wretched state. The expenditure of this year for establishments, exclusive of interest of debt, is thirty millions. Suppose it can be reduced next year to twenty millions, a reduction of one-third. The revenue, now that the taxes on property and malt are withdrawn, will fall short of the reduced expenditure (even if you were to add the sinking fund to the ordinary revenue), according to Huskisson’s calculation, by five or six millions.

‘We are very much afraid of being run close to-night on the question of an increase to Croker’s peace salary, and a petty increase of two or three hundred pounds a year to the Commissioners of the Revenue. If, after having been supported through such events as have lately taken place in Europe, after having conducted a war of principle for twenty-three years, and brought it to such a glorious termination, the Government is to be abandoned by its friends on such paltry questions as these, it will be equally extraordinary, and, in the end, unfortunate.

‘I hope I shall be able to give you a better account of to-night’s contest than of that on the Property Tax. If we are beaten or run very hard, if we are compelled to reduce salaries already actually granted, it will be very embarrassing to the Government, and have a very bad effect in the country. I tremble for the Civil List, in which there has been an enormous exceeding.’



' *March 21.*—The temper of the House of Commons manifested itself last night completely. It was proposed to make the peace salary of the Secretary of the Admiralty equal to the war salary. Methuen, the seconder of the Address, moved a resolution, not merely curtailing the salary of the Secretary, but censuring the proposed increase as an unnecessary expenditure of the public money. We resisted and beat Mr. Methuen, but only by a majority of twenty-nine. If the question had simply been whether the salaries should be reduced or not, we should have been beaten decidedly, but Bankes and others who require the reduction voted against the censure.

' It is impossible not to feel the injury which these questions, paltry as they are, are doing to Government. I am not singular in thinking that if the Government had been beaten last night they could not have retained their offices. The Government must give up Croker's salary, and I know they intend to give it up.'

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. Littlehales.*

' *March 25, 1816.*

' I must now call your attention to the necessary reductions in the several departments connected with the army and military estimates. As the latter are to be so much diminished, the labours of the departments must be diminished also, and the number of persons employed must undergo a corresponding reduction.

' In this country they are reducing in all directions. After what has passed in the House of Commons it would be a needless waste of the time of both of us were I to say anything about the necessity of economy.'

' *March 26.*—How is it possible to propose that one shilling should be granted to a general officer on the staff in Ireland, when sixpence is granted in England? This is called "a modification" in official phrase, but it ought to be called doubling the allowance.

' Set your face steadily against all increases of salary, all extra allowances, all plausible claims for additional

emolument. Economy must be the order of the day, rigid economy, or——But I need not allude to the alternative.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

' March 26, 1816.

' The state of the magistracy generally, and the necessity of an entire revision of it, will be prominent topics in the debate of April 4. It is fair that the Chancellor should know this. It is his immediate concern, though I think we ought all to stand connected. I never shall shift responsibility from the shoulders of the Government, as a collective body, to those of an individual member of it.

' Tell the Chancellor that the magistracy will be discussed. Profess my willingness to say anything on the subject which he may wish. He will, I know, mount on his high horse and prance, about the character of judges, readiness to meet inquiry, and so forth. That will do very well in Dublin, but it will not answer here. I wish to God one could prevent the character of judges from being attacked; but as we cannot, we had better be able to defend them, as I have no doubt we can. As to readiness to meet inquiry, that will not be a very serviceable weapon to fight with on a motion for inquiry.'

' *March 27.*—This is not a happy moment for the increase of salaries. Hold the purse-strings very close, except in those cases where the peace of the country is concerned.'

' *March 29.*—I will thank you immediately to accede to the discontinuance of the "Dublin Journal." I am sure Lord Whitworth will concur in this. The account might be fairly stated thus. Given to Mr. Gifford 60*l.*, loss to Government 1,400*l.*, and in point of injury and discredit as much more.'

*Mr. Peel to the Attorney-General.*

' March 29, 1816.

' The state of the magistracy will be a prominent feature in the debate. The object will be to effect a general revision and reform. I am sure it needs reform, and will not bear

much inquiry. What do you think, and what does the Lord Chancellor think, of a general revision, of dissolving the present Commission and forming a new one ?'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'*March 30.*—Lord Liverpool seems much relieved by your generous offer to remain till May 1817.

'Lord Castlereagh is in very low spirits, but I do not think there is any misunderstanding between him and Lord Liverpool. He perhaps feels uneasy at the prospect of Canning's accession to the Cabinet, and no doubt he is annoyed at finding all the reputation which he has gained by his continental labours avails him so little in the House of Commons on questions of economy.

'I have been trying to impress Lord Liverpool with the extreme danger of a political inquiry into the affairs of Ireland. The more I think of it the more I am inclined to deprecate it. It is very difficult to manage even the most limited inquiry. How could we prevent the introduction of Tithe, Magistracy, the Catholic question itself? Suppose this question asked, "What influence have the Catholic priesthood over the peasantry, and how do they exert it?" Does not the answer to this open immediately the whole question of the relation between the priesthood and the State? I fear, however, some inquiry we must have, though no good can come from it, but the temper of the times must be consulted. I am satisfied to resist inquiry, but then if I am beaten I should like to resign, and not submit to the humiliation of being forced into such a measure.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'*April 2.*—The Chancellor thinks I am nervous upon some matters in which I am not personally concerned, and he is perfectly right. I am more than nervous when I consider the probable consequences of a Committee to inquire into the state of Ireland, when I reflect that I could not select a Committee upon which, from the very necessity,

of putting on it certain individuals in office—Lord Castle-reagh, Fitzgerald, Pole, &c.—I must not insure an immense majority of persons pledged on the Catholic question. Every Opposition man that I could choose prepared to go almost any length, and even my own friends prepared to go infinitely farther than myself. Have I not a right to be nervous when I contemplate a political inquiry into the state of Ireland entered into with such a bias; when the Chancellor has told me within two days that there are “monstrous abuses in and by the magistracy of Ireland;” and when I feel perfectly confident that if that honest admission were known I should be outvoted by a majority of two to one if I attempted to resist an inquiry into the state of the magistracy?

‘The Chancellor says, “How can a committee reform these abuses?” I do assure the Chancellor that a committee will not be prevented by asking such a question. I will do more to prevent a committee by showing that, in the alleged instances of misconduct on the part of magistrates, Government had looked accurately and impartially into the case (as they have done in Hamilton’s case), by being prepared to vindicate the Government where its conduct is censured, and to explain its conduct where it is questioned, than by all the ingenious arguments about the respective powers of the Executive and Legislative authorities that were ever devised. I have to deal with a House of Commons whose decided and irresistible tone is this—if we show a strong suspicion of grievance, and you cannot satisfactorily explain, we must have a committee, not to act, but to inquire; not to reform the magistracy of Ireland, but to establish the necessity of your reforming it. Don’t suppose, and don’t let the Chancellor suppose, that I am nervous either for his sake or mine, but I am nervous on this account—I think the present system on which the Government of Ireland is conducted is the best; but I am terribly afraid that Englishmen who know nothing of Ireland would not concur with me if they inquired into detail.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘April 5.—You will have seen that Lord Buckingham’s motion for a Committee of the whole House [of Lords] was negatived by a large majority, but the debate was not a very consoling one. If we could persuade our friends to be silent, we might have some hope. But if Lord Redesdale will address himself to the Opposition benches, and will describe Ireland as a country in which “the administration of justice is corrupt,” will lament over the failure of his constant endeavours to procure reforms, at what a tremendous disadvantage do we enter the lists. You would have trembled if you had heard his speech and Lord Mountjoy’s, neither of them intended to do any harm, but admitting through sheer ignorance all sorts of abuses which do not exist, and cutting the ground from under us.’

*Mr. Peel to the Attorney-General (Saurin).*

‘April 8.—I wish to God it was possible to revise the magistracy, for half our disorders and disturbances arise from the negligence of some and corruption and party spirit of others. But what local authorities can you trust to? The Chancellor cannot act without local information, and the sources whence he must derive it are in many cases as impure as the magistracy.

‘Pray let me hear from you as to the appointment of Sheriffs. In this, like everything else, we have English practice and English prejudice to contend with.

‘I cannot make Lord Liverpool understand why the judges in Ireland should not have the virtual nomination. If there were no Smith, and no Fletcher, and no Day, and no electioneering judges, I think the recommendation of the judge of assize might be safely attended to. But you will see at once the difficulty of making an objection to the application of the principle on account of the character or practices of individuals.

‘Lord Redesdale says the office of Sub-Sheriff is made a

great instrument of abuse. Have you reason to think it? And can you enable me to remedy in any way such abuse if it exists?

‘When English members hear that the Sheriff appoints the Grand Jury, that the Grand Jury tax the county, that the Sheriff has considerable influence at elections, and that the Sheriff is appointed openly on the recommendation of the member supporting the Government, they are startled not a little.

‘It is of the greatest importance to the administration of justice, I believe, that the Lord Lieutenant should have a very large discretion as to the appointment of Sheriff, but it is quite impossible to defend the exercise by the Sheriff of any power which gives to the party supporting Government undue preponderance in the county. That will, I am sure, be felt to be an abuse, and a great abuse, of the authority of Sheriff. The best plan probably of remedying the evil will be to curtail the power which makes his appointment political, and if there are any abuses in the office of Sub-Sheriff, to correct them without delay.

‘I mean to impute many of the evils of Ireland to the real cause of it—that infernal curse, the forty-shilling freeholds.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘April 8.—There is nothing I know which is more surprising to an Englishman than the mode of nominating the Sheriffs in Ireland. I know that this is a most convenient patronage to the Government, but I know also that I cannot hint in the House of Commons at such a source of patronage, and I confess I have great doubts as to the legitimacy of it.

‘I can form a judgment of the impression such a practice makes on the minds of others by witnessing that which it makes on Lord Liverpool. He can hardly credit it, and most cautiously avoided alluding to the subject in the House of Lords. He told me he could not find a word to say in its defence.’

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. Littlehales.*

‘April 9, 1816.

‘I had a number of inquiries made of me last night respecting a lamentable affray in the town of Roscrea, in which a man has been killed by the yeomanry of that town. It is absolutely necessary that inquiry should take place into this whole affair, and if the corps of yeomanry have acted improperly as a body, for God’s sake as a body let them be punished. There is enough bad blood in Tipperary without those blockheads aggravating it with their party tunes.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘April 10, 1816.

‘If you should approve of my proposed amendment to Newport’s address, we should apply ourselves without delay to the preparation of the means of affording information. The chief thing required will be accuracy and precision. If any one intelligent person could devote his time to the collection of the materials, it would probably be the best way of setting about the business. When we have got the skeleton of our history, we can easily clothe the bones with a suitable proportion of flesh and blood.

‘If it is wished, I will undertake to put the facts in a proper state to appear before Parliament; and as I must of course have greater experience in parliamentary papers than others of your advisers, I may undertake this part of the duty without reserve or scruple.

‘When you read my communications with respect to parliamentary proceedings concerning Ireland, remember always this maxim, of the truth of which I am very strongly convinced—that it is expedient to yield something voluntarily and with a good grace, in order to prevent the necessity of yielding much more by compulsion.’

‘April 27.—Our Irish debate last night was dull and uninteresting enough. I believe Mr. Plunket surprised and disappointed everyone. He made a factious, mischievous, uncandid speech, depreciating every advantage that is

likely to be extended to Ireland, complaining that the rope and the gibbet are the only remedies, &c. I never was more surprised than at the tone he took. Not that it was hostile to us, for it was the reverse; but if I had seen the speech reported, I should have said it was the speech of Mr. O'Gorman, not of Mr. Plunket.

'Grattan's was at least equally extraordinary on the other side. He cut the ground entirely away from his friends. Newport's address alleged that "the state of Ireland is most afflicting, and pregnant with danger to the British Empire." Grattan attributed a great part of the disorders to commercial distress, declared that the insurrections were mere cutaneous disorders, that the state of Ireland was a state not for condolence but for thanksgiving and congratulation. There was no brilliancy, none of his usual peculiarity of style, but any man who heard him speak must have come to the conclusion that he is become an ultra-loyalist.

'After Lord Redesdale's declaration (to which his having held the office of Chancellor gives a weight which nothing else would give to an opinion proceeding from him) that the mode of appointing Sheriffs "poisons the sources of justice," and witnessing the general feeling among the English against making the nomination of a most important officer in the execution of justice dependent on the will of the county member, I thought it highly expedient to give a positive assurance that the Government would revert to the ancient and legal practice of appointing the Sheriffs in Ireland.

'I really do not apprehend any, or at least very little, inconvenience from the abandonment of the present practice in any point of view, even in that of patronage. With a pure Bench—and time will, I hope, purify it—the change would be an essential change for the better.'

The interest of the Catholic question this year lay chiefly in an open rupture among the Catholics themselves, the extreme men quarrelling also with their best Protestant supporter, Grattan.



*Mr. Peel to Lord Sidmouth.*

‘Feb. 17, 1816.

‘From the inclosed you will perceive that the schism which has long existed between the Catholic aristocracy and the “Catholic leaders,” as they call themselves, is openly avowed, and that a meeting of the former, respectably attended and temperately conducted, has taken place. The information is of considerable importance. I think you will find that the mob, and the priesthood, and the prelacy, will adhere to the “leaders.”

‘Tinnehinch is the name of Mr. Grattan’s residence, and “the Tinnehinch gang” is one of the mildest of the designations now applied by the Catholic leaders to Mr. Grattan and his family.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘May 8, 1816.

‘The inclosed paper contains the late resolutions and petition of the Roman Catholic prelates. The prelates will unite with those who demand concession without security, and the prelates and Roman Catholic lawyers will carry with them the whole mass of the population, and effectually prevent any kind of concession that is not perfectly unqualified and unembarrassed by securities. I verily believe the re-enactment of the Penal Laws would not produce much more commotion and clamour for a time, than the enactment at the present moment of the Bill of 1813.’

This adhesion of the Bishops showed how true were the Catholic instincts, or how great was the influence of O’Connell, in denouncing, as a blow to spiritual independence, the Veto proposed in 1813. To such ‘securities’ as Grattan then contemplated, it was clear that Catholics would not consent. Yet, on Grattan’s resolution to take the Catholic disabilities into early consideration, so disheartened were the Protestant party in the House of Commons that not one of them would speak but Mr. Peel. They held their tongues, voted, and were surprised to find themselves so strong.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘Irish Office: May 25, 1816.

‘I hope you were satisfied with the division, if not with the debate, on the Catholic question. The Protestant cause has fallen into the hands of lukewarm or timid or incompetent men. Can you conceive that within ten minutes of the division our friends proposed that we should not divide, fancying we should be in a small minority? Yorke was adverse to a division decidedly. Ryder was not in the House. Sir William Scott would give no advice, but would not speak. Manners thought we ought to divide, but that it was impossible, unless some one would speak even a few words. Grattan, Parnell, Mather, Hippisley, Castlereagh had spoken; not a single Protestant had said a word, and I determined, therefore, to take a part which others with more weight might have taken, and to divide the House at any rate. Indeed if some person in office had not signified his intention to divide, some country gentleman no doubt would have done so. The result was a majority of thirty, to our great surprise and satisfaction.’

‘*May 27.*—To tell you the real truth, I am not at all sorry that Mr. Webber was not present at the Catholic debate. I hear that he is a violent and intemperate man, with little command over himself, and if this be his character he will do more harm than good. If I were you, I would send word to him that it was a matter of perfect indifference to the Government whether he went over or not, that it was due to the Primate to go over, but that you would not encourage the slightest hope of personal advantage to himself from the voyage. We do not want him, and I really would not give him the promise of a tide-waiter’s place for any service he can render us this session.’

‘*May 20.*—I will take good care of Littlehales on his arrival. As large bodies move slowly, we have yet heard nothing of him. He will be just in time to hear of the

discomfiture of his friends the dandies. Mr. Brummell has decamped, to the confusion of his collaterals and his creditors. He left town with 1*l.* 5*s.*, the relic of his broken fortunes, and has conferred the benefit of his countenance upon the Continent. One of those who had severely suffered by his credulity and reliance on Brummell's promises of repayment sent him 100*l.* in compassion. What has become of Lord Alvanley, and how far he is implicated in Mr. Brummell's misdeeds, I know not. He does not appear, however. I believe some public good, as far as the rising generation is concerned, will result from the downfall of such heroes as Sir H. Mildmay and Mr. Brummell.'

'*May 27.*—Sir Edward is arrived in great force. I really, though knowing him so well, and the things which are uppermost in his mind, was not prepared for the answer he gave me to the first question I asked him, which was, "How matters were going in Ireland?" He said that you had given more dinners within the months of February, March, and April than he ever remembered; that people had been asked in their turn and out of their turn; that everything had gone off perfectly well, except on one unfortunate night, on which Lady Manners had a party at the time there was another party at the Castle. I think Sir Edward is rather surprised that these subjects formed no part of the debate on the state of Ireland.'

In this session a measure passed for combining the Treasuries of Ireland and Great Britain, and Mr. Peel had to defend some of the arrangements. In place of an Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer and five Irish Lords of the Treasury, the Bill gave to Ireland only a Vice-Treasurer, thus curtailing the patronage, yet on the high salary proposed the Government sustained defeat.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'Irish Office: June 17, 1816.

'All the patronage of the revenue is left still with the Lord Lieutenant. I expected that much stronger attempts

would be made to deprive him of it, but you may depend upon it that the honest manner in which you have disposed of that patronage is the reason why the proposal to retain it in the hands of the Lord Lieutenant has met with so little opposition. That blockhead, Sir Henry Parnell, is the only man who expressed a wish for its transfer to other hands.

‘We had on Friday, and shall have again this day, a most severe contest on the Vice-Treasurer’s office. The Opposition have made the greatest exertions for this night’s division.’

‘June 18.—We were actually beaten last night on the clause granting 3,500*l.* a year to the Vice-Treasurer. The exultation of the Opposition was very great. Ponsonby moved that 2,000*l.* should be granted, and carried it by 100 to 98.’

Mr. Peel’s intention to leave Ireland with Lord Whitworth now began to take definite shape, and on July 27 he writes to Sir Charles Saxton from Dublin Castle: ‘I appear here positively for the last time, and when I bid adieu to this country on the next meeting of Parliament I shall bid adieu to it for ever.’ He could hope to leave it better governed than he had found it.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Sidmouth.*

‘Dublin Castle: Aug. 17, 1816.

‘I recollect no period since I have had any connection with Ireland in which it has been more at rest than it is at the present moment. It cannot be supposed that the condition of the lower orders is much improved; but I believe, by the operation of the strong measures which were resorted to in the course of last year, those who were principally concerned in the disturbances which led to them are satisfied of the futility of their absurd projects to better their condition by acts of violence. We are in a much better state than we were eighteen months since.

‘During the present year we have had no occasion to

resort to the Insurrection Act in any instance, and the counties from which it was withdrawn about three months since remain perfectly tranquil.'

Later in the year Mr. Peel addressed to the Prime Minister a long and interesting letter, recording, after five years' experience, his deliberate opinions on the policy of employing Englishmen rather than Irishmen to govern Ireland, and on the delicate nature of the relations between the Chief Secretary and the Lord Lieutenant.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

'(Private and confidential.)

'Dublin Castle: Oct. 3<sup>r</sup>, 1816.

'If you can, send an Englishman to succeed me; he may be inferior to Irish competitors in many respects, and still upon the whole better suited for this office, from the very circumstance of his not being an Irishman. After the first year the Englishman will get through the business of the office with greater ease and satisfaction to himself than the Irishman; and though he may not be in the least degree more honest or impartial, will find it much less difficult to establish a character for being so. Having no private interests to attend to, and no private friendships and partialities to gratify, he may refuse a favour or grant one without being suspected, as in most cases the Irishman would be (perhaps unjustly), of an interested motive.

'I am sure an Englishman *cæteris paribus* is more likely to maintain a good understanding with the Lord Lieutenant than an Irishman. There are no two offices in the State in which that good understanding is so absolutely essential to the public service and the comfort of those who fill them as the offices of Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary. They are offices the respective duties of which are quite undefined. The Lord Lieutenant is paramount in point of law, and by his commission, but then from his attendance in Parliament the Secretary is practically (I mean in all ordinary cases) made responsible; and really unless there is

almost an identity of feeling and of interests, it will be very difficult to conduct the business in harmony. Now if with a new Lord Lieutenant an Irish Secretary is associated, I think the result will be that the Secretary will be Viceroy over him. At first it will be very convenient to the new Lord Lieutenant to have as his Secretary a person acquainted with the characters and claims and connections of men; he will naturally take his advice, and defer to his judgment. But when the Lord Lieutenant himself becomes competent and wishes to exercise a judgment of his own, he will find few persons disposed quietly to relinquish an influence which they have gained perhaps without design. I judge on this partly from my own feelings, and from a conviction that it would be much pleasanter to a new Lord Lieutenant in many respects to have a new Secretary than to retain me in his service. In this view of the subject I may be considered almost in the same light as an Irishman.

‘I feel it of so much importance that the Lord Lieutenant and the Secretary should be unconnected with this country, that I doubt whether you have made a very good choice of a Lord Lieutenant in Lord Talbot. I believe in many respects he is well suited for the office, but his connections here will, I fear, embarrass him much. He is related to the Duke of Leinster and to Lord Downshire, two of the most powerful opponents of the Government. Lady Talbot’s brother is a weak conceited man, hostile to the Government, and very much offended that they have not given him high office, for which Lord Talbot has recommended him. I hope and believe that Lord Talbot will have good sense enough not to make him a confidant and an adviser, but I am sure he must provide for him. Lady Talbot has other connections in Dublin.’

During the winter outrages continued, some of a revolting and inhuman character; but Mr. Peel abode by his resolve to judge for himself of any alleged necessity for exceptional measures, and to rely, as far as possible, on a vigilant police with ordinary powers.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Sidmouth.*

‘Dublin Castle : Nov. 1, 1816

‘I do not often trouble you with the detail of individual outrages, but one has been committed of so atrocious a nature that I cannot help reporting it to you.

‘On the night of Tuesday last the house of a person who had prosecuted capitally to conviction three persons at the last Louth Assizes was set on fire by a number of armed men, who prevented the escape of the inmates of it, and actually consigned to the flames a family of eight persons, five of whom were children. This abominable outrage is entirely to be attributed to revenge against the prosecutor, and is but one of many proofs of the wretched depravity and sanguinary disposition of the lower orders of this country.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. R. S. Carew.*

‘Dublin Castle : Dec. 17, 1816.

‘The measures you have adopted in the county of Wexford for the purpose of extinguishing any rising disposition to disturbance, by periodical meetings of the magistrates, and the active and unremitting exercise of the ordinary powers, meet with my unqualified approbation.

‘I assure you there is no person in Ireland more reluctant to resort to extraordinary measures than I am. I would never sanction them without being perfectly satisfied of their necessity, and I should require very strong evidence to satisfy me. It is better to bear with some disturbance than to repress it by the means of unusual and extreme authority. A great part of the effect of such authority depends upon the infrequency of its application, just in the same way that the effect of a strong medicine will vary accordingly as the constitution is accustomed to it or not. You may rest assured that I shall not be easily terrified by rumours of disturbance. I am pretty well accustomed to them.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Farnham.*

‘Dublin Castle: Jan. 17, 1817.

‘I fear nothing but a regular police can prevent assassinations and nightly outrages like those which have been recently committed. At least, nothing can so effectually detect and bring to punishment those who have been concerned in them. If there were any apprehension of a general rising, it might be well to put the yeomanry on permanent duty, but the villains with whom you have to contend will be too prudent to attack those who can resist them.’

Some of Mr. Peel’s general views at this time of the policy to be pursued in Ireland are set forth in the following letters.

*Mr. Peel to the High Sheriff for County Wicklow.*

‘March 22, 1816.

‘Among measures likely to be productive of practical benefit I consider those which are calculated to secure to the productions of Ireland a just preference over the productions of foreign countries, to give full energy to the civil power, and to extend to all classes without distinction the advantages of useful knowledge. By the operation of such measures the enterprize of the rich and the industry of the poor will be encouraged, those shameful excesses which are the obstacle to all improvement will be punished and repressed, and the foundations will be laid on which at some future period permanent good order and tranquillity may be established.’

*Mr. Peel to the Hon. and Rev. C. Le P. Trench.*

‘April 27, 1816.

‘I agree with you that the great object is to find employment for the poor of Ireland, and to reclaim them from habits of idleness and vice, not by educating them, but by



making it their interest to be industrious. I know moral habits will not be inculcated by the mere ability to read and write, and if the lower orders cannot find employment they must be vicious. But I have always been, and always shall be, as strong an advocate for giving that preference to the productions of Ireland, natural or artificial, which will best promote the industry of the people, as I am for instructing the lower orders.

‘The enormous and overgrown population of Ireland is (considering the want of manufactures or any employment except agricultural) a great obstacle in the way of general improvement, and an obstacle which much wiser men than I am will find it very difficult to remove.’

*Mr. Peel to the High Sheriff of Kilkenny.*

‘April 29, 1816.

‘If I had considered the interests of Ireland merely as the separate and local interests of a constituent part of the Empire, I should still have felt it my duty to be the advocate and promoter of them. But I am satisfied that her interests and her prosperity are inseparably interwoven with the interests and prosperity of Great Britain.

‘Feeling, therefore, that the advance and improvement of Ireland is a substantial benefit to the whole British Empire, and having always taken a warmer concern in her welfare than the mere obligations of official duty have inspired, I may safely assure you that, whatever may be the period of my official connection with Ireland, my disposition to promote her interests and my gratification in witnessing her prosperity will not be determined by it.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘June 24, 1816.

‘I think I should be chargeable with a great omission of duty if I did not call your attention to the large and increasing extent of emigration from Ireland to the United States.

‘If emigration were confined to the South, where the population is dense and disproportionate to the means of employing it, I should consider it a benefit to the country. I do not think Ireland would at all suffer from an emigration from the South of ten times the extent of that which at present takes place. But unfortunately the Northern inhabitants are the most disposed to emigrate. On the last Council day there were upwards of 700 applications from the North of Ireland for permission to leave it, in almost all cases for the United States. At the preceding Council there were about 680, and a Council is generally held once a week. I think this diminution of the Protestant population very unfortunate, and I think it still more unfortunate that not only Ireland should lose so many industrious and valuable inhabitants, but that the United States of America should reap the advantage.

‘It may be impossible to prevent emigration, but it seems to me not impossible to secure to one part of the Empire the benefit resigned by another, and by holding out ample encouragement to settle in the Canadas or other parts of our North American possessions to contribute to their future strength and resources. How this encouragement can be best afforded I must leave to others to determine. I know it could not be without considerable expense, but I much doubt whether the saving of that expense at present would prove true economy in the end.’

In the winter Mr. Peel’s chief anxiety was lest inflated accounts in the English newspapers of rioting in London should stir up ignorant men to similar attempts in Ireland.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. J. Beckett.*

‘Dublin Castle : Dec. 5, 1816.

‘The tone of the “*Courier*,” and its second editions at three o’clock, and third editions at four, do great mischief here. The people here, who are unaccustomed to riotous proceedings, believe you are all in the greatest jeopardy in

London. A man asked me yesterday whether it was true that the Duke of York at the head of the Guards was assisting the people, instead of checking their outrageous doings.

‘The surest way to make a ferment here is to induce a belief that there is one in England. We burn people in their houses, and shoot at them from behind ditches, in this country in great abundance, but there is a most salutary terror of what is called “the Army,” whether it consists of two regiments or of a couple of dragoons, and in Dublin nothing can exceed the tranquillity, except (I fear) the distress and wretchedness of the lower orders in some districts of the city.

‘Distress in this country has a different effect—almost a contrary effect—from what it has in England. Sheer wickedness and depravity are the chief sources of our crimes and turbulence, and I am satisfied that severe distress would rather tend to diminish than to increase them.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Sidmouth.*

‘Dec. 5, 1816.

‘It would have a very good effect if the Prince Regent’s bounty were extended to the poor of this city, in the same manner in which it has been to the poor of Spitalfields. It would be of great service to alleviate distress, which in some districts of this city is extremely severe, and which is borne by the sufferers with the greatest patience.

‘I do not know how you could appropriate such a sum as 2,000*l.* more profitably so far as public opinion is concerned, and more charitably with reference to individual distress, than by issuing it in aid of the funds raised by public subscription.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘Dublin Castle: Dec. 12, 1816.

‘Nothing has disgusted me more than the accounts of the contemptible riots in London. If such wretches as

Preston and Watson and Hunt can get six columns of the papers dedicated to their trumpety proceedings, their summons of the Tower, &c., every madman who wishes to raise himself into notice will pursue the same plan. Depend upon it the tone of the "Courier" will give great offence in England. It will be thought by sensible and moderate men that the Government really wishes to magnify a mob into a rebellion, in order that a tub may be thrown to the whale, the public attention diverted from economy, and a pretext made for maintaining the military.'

*Mr. Peel to the Speaker (Abbot).*

'Farnham, Cavan : Dec. 25, 1816.

'The internal state of Ireland I cannot help considering very satisfactory so far as the public peace is concerned, when I compare it with that of England, and reflect on the complicated difficulties of the present times—so satisfactory, indeed, that I have proposed to the Government in England a reduction, which I think they did not expect, to the amount of 3,000 men in our military establishment.

'There is, no doubt, the average proportion of murders and burnings and other atrocities, the acts of a set of human beings very little advanced from barbarism, unaccustomed to regard the law either as the protector from or as the avenger of outrage, and subject, so far as the interests of society are concerned, to the pernicious influence of the religion they profess. It is quite impossible for anyone to witness the remorselessness with which crimes are committed here, the almost total annihilation of the agency of conscience as a preventive of crime, and the universal contempt in which the obligation of any but an illegal oath is held by the mass of the people, without being satisfied that the prevailing religion of Ireland operates as an impediment rather than an aid to the ends of the Civil Government.

'There is, however, as little of disaffection towards the State as I have ever heard of, and less than I can remember. In Dublin there is great distress, but the only

public proceeding on the part of those who are suffering most from it has hitherto been a respectful application from the poor manufacturers of the Liberty to the Lord Lieutenant that he would wear a coat of Irish cloth, and encourage others to wear one also.

‘The demagogues have been very quiet of late. If the English papers will not magnify Watson to a Catiline, and represent England to be in a state of confusion, I believe we shall have very little trouble here.

‘I shall be in London on the 28th of January, and shall be truly happy to find you in a state of health to look forward without apprehension to the dreary prospects before us of long nights and bitter warfare.’

In England the year 1817 began with much disturbance, and fears which led to the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, with other drastic legislation. In happy contrast to this the Irish Secretary was able to state in Parliament that it was not found necessary to extend to Ireland the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill, nor the Bill for preventing seditious meetings, and a considerable reduction would be made in the military force employed. His reports to the Lord Lieutenant show the continued pressure in Parliament for savings of this and of every kind.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘Irish Office: Jan. 29, 1817.

‘I saw the Prince go down to the Lords, from the windows of the Admiralty. There was a great crowd near the Horse Guards on the Parade, animated by a very bad spirit. On his return the crowd was amazingly increased both in numbers and violence. Opinions are much divided as to the fact of a shot having been fired from an air gun.

‘The general spirit of the country is worse, I apprehend, than we understood it to be. Lord Liverpool told me yesterday that he had been a member of the Secret Committees of 1794, and that nothing came to light then which showed nearly so disaffected and seditious a feeling among the people as exists at present. A Secret Committee to

inquire into the state of the country will be appointed. Lord Sidmouth mentioned that there were Hampden Clubs and Reform Clubs and combinations of every kind and denomination throughout the country.

‘I think there is a very satisfactory feeling in the House of Commons. The state of the finances is alarming. You must not be surprised at a proposal to reduce five thousand men in Ireland instead of three.’

‘*Jan.* 30.—On the Address, my predictions of a handsome majority were verified by the event. We divided 262 against 112. Canning made a very brilliant speech, and the feeling of the House towards the Government was good, excellent with respect to reform and seditious societies. The language of the country gentlemen is that if the Government can show that they have done the work of retrenchment honestly, they will be as firmly supported as any Government ever was.’

‘*Feb.* 12.—It is confidently expected by the Opposition that they will beat us on the proposal to lop off two of the Lords of the Admiralty. Really the House of Commons is usurping the functions of the Executive Government. The Government ought to determine what they think right; and not to do what they think wrong merely because it suits the present taste of the House. I am truly sorry that they have thought it right to subscribe a miserable pittance to the relief of the State, and submit to a voluntary income tax on official men. It is a useless concession to an ignorant clamour. It will encourage the delusion of those who are persuaded that the present distresses arise from official salaries, and from pensions and sinecures, when they see the Government relieving the State by giving up a tenth of their incomes.’

‘*Feb.* 20.—The Cabinet has determined to surrender those offices which are generally understood to be sinecures, in order that we may make a better fight upon the parliamentary offices. It is proposed to give to the Crown in lieu of the sinecures the power of granting pensions to those who have held high and effective offices in the State.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘Feb. 22, 1817.

‘You will have seen the reports of the Secret Committee, and that the Reform Societies here have in view nothing short of revolution. Let A. be very vigilant in looking after the Dublin reformers. You see how contemptible in character and station, how insane in their projects, but how formidable in their numbers, the reformers of England are. As every cottager in Ireland, or nearly so, has a vote, there is not much pretext for seeking a reform in the representation of Ireland.

‘A Bill to abolish sinecures has twice passed the Commons and been rejected in the Lords. I wish to call your attention to it so far as Irish offices are concerned. Immediately on the receipt of this, write to the Commissioners of Customs, Stamps, and Excise, requesting to know, first, what are the offices to which no duties are attached; secondly, whether there are any offices now performed by deputy which can hereafter be performed in person by the holder.’

In March took place a correspondence between the Chief Secretary and his Irish colleagues, which affords good evidence of Mr. Peel’s vigorous capacity, even at this early date, for perceiving and grappling with the difficulties of a practical question. Having received from Ireland tidings of impending famine, he addressed his mind to measures of relief. It is hardly possible without being tedious to give an adequate impression of his discernment in handling the problems which those on the spot without much insight were vainly endeavouring to solve. But the following letters may serve to exemplify his mode of dealing with such questions.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘Irish Office: March 6, 1817.

‘I have been waiting rather anxiously for the documents which I understood it was your intention to send me respecting the apprehended scarcity in Ireland. General

information may satisfy me that such apprehensions are justly entertained, but I must have precise information to enable me, or others whom I may consult, to judge of the measures which it may be expedient to adopt.

‘You allude to two measures as deserving of consideration—prohibition of distillation, and prohibition of the export of potatoes. Lord Whitworth seems thoroughly impressed with the policy of the former measure. I know not whether he has considered it in detail.

‘I put aside all considerations of revenue, of encouragement to illicit distillation, of the difficulty of suspending the intercourse in spirits between the two countries, and I assert that if I bring in a Bill this day to suspend legal distillation in Ireland, I shall do a great deal of harm, and no good. I know there is a great outcry on the subject, but we must not be misled by such an outcry. Let us calmly inquire into the matter, and as we have better information than others, let us judge for ourselves. I had documents enough in this country, which I have been at great pains to procure, to enable me to convince every man who heard me in the House of Commons that it would not be prudent now to interfere with the distilleries. [Here follow details.]

‘Now with respect to the prohibition of the export of potatoes. I am to see Lord Liverpool and the Board of Trade to-morrow on the subject, but I have really not one single document on which I can enable them to form a judgment.

‘Observe I do not underrate the urgent necessity of the case. I believe the pressure is alarming. I tremble at the apprehension of its consequences. But it is not sufficient to state the evil to the Government here. We are desired to consider of a remedy. I really was not aware that there was any considerable export of potatoes from Ireland. I thought that potatoes were frequently brought from Liverpool to Dublin. Let me know from what ports potatoes are sent. I suppose you have desired the collectors of the different ports to ascertain this.



‘ Consider for a moment the extreme delicacy of the subject—that you might really with as much justice enact that the wants of the starving inhabitants of a district in Scotland shall not be supplied from Northumberland. Consider that if there is not food in Ireland to last till the next harvest, it must be brought, cost what it will, from England, and shall we set the example of prohibition? If we are starving in May, England will at least be suffering severely, and would she not with fairness retaliate?’

‘ I cannot, advised and informed as I at present am, form any judgment satisfactory to myself upon the subject. Let me hear from you without delay on this most important question.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘ March 8, 1817.

‘ I am just returned from a discussion of three hours at the Board of Trade on the subject of scarcity in Ireland. There was a general disposition to admit the pressure of the case to be so strong as to put all considerations of general policy and principle aside, and a strong inclination to resort to any measure which, whether wise or not under ordinary circumstances, could be shown to be applicable to the present emergency. [Here follow details]

‘ Circumstanced as Ireland is, though there may be a sufficient supply, still some districts may be actually starving, while in others there may be abundance. This naturally follows from the condition of the poor in Ireland. They are not buyers of food but growers of it, and have no money to purchase, if what they usually grow fails them. There may, therefore, be many mountainous districts inhabited by poor wretches whose crops have failed, and who have not a farthing to supply themselves with food. I shall be glad to know whether this is not the exact state of the case.

‘ Now, if these districts were at all limited in number, the Government might in case of extreme necessity administer relief by direct interference. But if half the population is

in this case, we cannot help trembling to think of the consequences of the first precedent.

‘I must say, however, that if there were within the reach of the Government a number of persons actually starving, and without the hope of relief from other quarters, I would overleap every difficulty and buy food for them at the public expense. I would do this only under circumstances of extreme necessity, and I would do it with every possible precaution, and with every effort to prevent its being known that the relief came from the hands of Government.

‘We hear that Donegal is the most distressed county. Would it not be well if I could present to the Government here a specimen of the distress, from inquiry made for the express purpose? General statements do not make half the impression that a few well-authenticated facts will make. I earnestly recommend you to send a person, or persons (for the expense of their mission is a trifling concern), into Donegal for instance.

[After detailed suggestions as to the persons best qualified to be sent, &c.] ‘If the subject were less important, I should apologise for the length of this letter.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘March 14, 1817.

‘I cannot tell you how much embarrassed I am by the communications that you have made to me with respect to the scarcity of provisions in Ireland.

‘After having had a meeting of the Government and others at the Board of Trade, and seriously discussed the policy of immediately prohibiting the export of potatoes from Ireland, I must now inform those who attended that meeting that the imports into Ireland exceed the exports from it for the last two months in the proportion of three to one.

‘I must beg of you to consider the peculiar difficulties of my situation. I am here between three and four hundred

miles from the seat of the Government for which I am acting. If I receive a letter from Ireland upon any subject of importance that requires immediate decision, I must act. If the letter is not explicit, if its statements are not founded on authentic documents, I cannot call for explanation or wait for authentic documents, as men in public situations in this country can do. With all the subordinate departments at hand, their references do not take as many hours as mine take days.

‘The presumption, too, must be that those on the spot can judge of the necessity better than I can. Really the letters I received from Lord Whitworth and yourself in the course of last week left me no alternative but to call an immediate meeting of the Government. I wanted explanation on a hundred points, it is true. I wanted to know the precise grounds on which the prohibition of distillation, or of the export of potatoes, was recommended, but I could not take upon myself the responsibility of waiting ten days till I could procure them, and of making no communication in the interval to the Government. You desired me, it is true, to consider some of the points; but recollect that the first step to consideration was to refer back to you the materials for it.

‘I could not venture to bring in a Bill to violate the Act of Union (and the prohibition of the export of potatoes would violate it) without the most convincing proofs of its necessity. Suppose I had brought in such a Bill, under the impression that it was absolutely necessary, and then found out that Ireland had gained three times as much by the import as she had lost by the export, and that the export in two months was but 390 tons. It was only yesterday I received a letter from Lord Whitworth urging the policy of such a Bill. I begin to think we shall cut a very ridiculous figure with our imports of corn into Ireland.’

The following letters show the nature of some of the remedies adopted, and their good effects.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘ June 9, 1817.

‘ I think a public notification should be issued of the intentions of Government to afford aid to the distressed districts wherein local subscriptions shall be made, in order that the relief may be more extended, and the encouragement to subscribe more general.

‘ I believe you will find in the office an account of similar proceedings adopted in 1799. I rather think the Protestant clergyman and the priest of the parish were employed, and it appears to me that it would be desirable to call in the aid of the latter if we can. It would tend to interest a powerful agent in repressing turbulence.

‘ The establishment of soup shops would, I should apprehend, be the best and most economical plan of affording relief; for the consumption of meat would *pro tanto* lessen the consumption of the ordinary articles of food.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘ June 22, 1817.

‘ The Poor Relief Bill has passed, and I quite approve of the list of Commissioners, and of all the steps you have taken. I believe you are right in leaving the importation of foreign provisions to private speculation.

‘ I hope you will take care to have as much labour as you can for the advance of public money in aid of charitable subscriptions, not for the sake of the labour, but of those from whom it is required.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Sidmouth.*

‘ Dublin Castle: July 21, 1817.

‘ The measure which I recommended of advancing from the public funds small sums of money in aid of local subscriptions has been productive of the best effects. Not more than 30,000*l.* has been expended, but it has supplied the means of affording the most extensive relief, and has

made a strong impression on the mass of the people in favour of the Government.

‘There was from the first a sufficiency of food, but it would have been impossible to distribute the stock equally over the country without the interference of the Government. In many districts wherein the landlords are absentees the inhabitants must have perished for want of food if they had not been assisted.’

## CHAPTER VIII.

1817-1818.

Great Speech on Catholic Claims—Thirteen Conversions—Protestants exultant—Mr. Peel enjoins Moderation—Congratulations—Election for the University of Oxford—Address from Irish Members—Sir Robert Peel's Factories Bill—Severe Economy—Political Patronage—Farewell to Ireland.

ANXIETIES about the short supply of food had not so engrossed Mr. Peel's attention as to prevent his dealing thoroughly with other questions. It was in May 1817 that he delivered the most telling of his many speeches against the removal of Catholic disabilities, defeating triumphantly a motion made by Grattan to take them into consideration by a Committee of the whole House. In the previous session, though there had been a majority of votes against the Catholic claims, yet in making bold to speak against them in the House of Commons, Mr. Peel had stood alone. All the more determined was he now to put forth his full strength in calm persuasive argument. He secured also this time the assistance of two Irish orators. Not one English, not one Scottish 'Protestant' took part in the debate. Mr. Peel's report of it is brief; and of its chief feature, the effect of his own speech, he makes no mention.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

April 21, 1817.

'If Webber is not too nervous, I am sure he has abilities and oratorical powers sufficient to be of great service to the cause. I will do everything in my power, depend upon it, to encourage him, and I will confer with him as to the best opportunity of rising, &c. Foster, I am sure, will speak.

‘I do not believe there is one word of truth in the report that Lord Liverpool’s view of the question is altered. Lord Sidmouth’s, I am sure, is not.

‘May 10.—The Catholic question came on last night, and the debate was concluded. The speakers for the Catholics were Castlereagh, Canning, Grattan, Parnell—and Yorke!<sup>1</sup> Against them, Foster, Webber, and myself. There was the utmost confidence that we should be beaten by a majority of five; but we beat our adversaries by a majority of twenty-four, having 245 against 221.

‘We are in great spirits. Yorke’s defection surprised everyone, but he made so ridiculous a speech that he did more good to us than harm.’

*Mr. Peel to the Attorney-General (Saurin).*

‘May 18, 1817.

‘You will be gratified by the division in the Lords. With the exception of Lord Harrowby’s, the speeches in favour of the Catholic claims were wretched. Lord Grenville’s was mere empty pompous declamation.’

The reception of Mr. Peel’s speech in the country was enthusiastic. The Protestant party poured forth benedictions. On May 14 the Grand Jury of Dublin presented their ‘sincere and most grateful thanks to the Right Hon. Robert Peel and the glorious majority of the House of Commons, who upon discussion of the Roman Catholic claims so ably and so faithfully supported the Protestant Constitution in Church and State.’

A similar ‘humble tribute of approbation’ was offered by the Grand Orange Lodge of Manchester, ‘for the manly and eloquent manner in which you advocated the Protestant interests of the Empire.’

On June 28 the Corporation of Dublin requested Mr. Peel to sit for his portrait. The Lord Mayor wrote hoping ‘to have his name as Chief Magistrate of Dublin inscribed under the likeness of a statesman whose fame will long survive the piece of art.’

<sup>1</sup> The Right Hon. C. Yorke, First Lord of the Admiralty.

In the mean time, on grounds of policy as well as good taste, Mr. Peel was doing what he could to check such demonstrations as might provoke the Catholic population.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'(Private.)

'Irish Office: May 19, 1817.

'I am sorry that such confident reports were spread that the Catholic question would be carried, for the failure being unexpected must cause great disappointment. I see obscure allusions in the Catholic prints to the course which after this failure the Catholics ought to pursue. I observe that it is said this is the severest blow since the battle of the Boyne &c., and doubts are expressed as to the propriety of again petitioning Parliament.

'I regret to see grand juries indulging in triumphs on the subject, and I am decidedly of opinion that that part of the press which is in any way likely to be influenced by the wishes of Government should be desired to abstain from all vulgar and insulting rejoicing on this occasion. There is a paper called the "Hibernian Journal," which is always offensive. I am quite sure you will agree with me in all this, and see as fully as I do the impolicy of adding irritation to disappointment.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'June 2, 1817.

'I am very sorry that that troublesome fellow Gifford is stirring up a City meeting on the Catholic question, or anything connected with it. After the triumph the Protestant cause has had, can anything be worse taste, or more prejudicial to it in future, than to provoke counter-meetings and counter-resolutions at such a time?'

There flowed in also complimentary letters from friends, not a few of them indulging in predictions of the eminence to which the young Protestant orator would rise.



*The Duke of Richmond to Mr. Peel.*

‘ May 28, 1817.

‘ Many thanks for your speech on the Catholic question. I have read it twice with the greatest satisfaction, and cannot see the possibility of a satisfactory answer to it.

‘ I am much obliged to you for thinking I have not changed on this subject. You certainly are quite right; but if I had changed, I am convinced I should have been re-changed after your speech. It is flattering that you think me steady, when C. Yorke proves that one can hardly trust anyone. I was surprised when Pole turned Catholic, but my astonishment at Yorke I cannot express.

‘ We hear of probable alterations in the Cabinet, of some Grenvilles joining. I trust Lord Liverpool will take care not to let in too many Catholics. He has already too many.

‘ In the changes I should like to see you Secretary for the Home Department, and I do not despair of it before long.’

*Judge Moore to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Henrietta Street: July 3, 1817.

‘ I consider you as having done more by this one speech towards asserting and preserving the Constitution of the United Kingdom, than any individual since the days of those who framed it for posterity at the Revolution, with the exception perhaps of Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Wellington. And considering you, as I must do, as mainly instrumental in disabusing the House of Commons, and conducting it to a proper decision upon the most vital of all subjects of civil discussion, I trust I shall not be long without the gratification of seeing you called to that station in the councils of our Sovereign, which I have for some time anticipated you are destined to fill, and for which your talents, integrity, straightforward conduct and truly constitutional principles qualify you pre-eminently.’

*Sir Richard Musgrave to Mr. Peel.*

‘Dublin: June 30, 1817.

‘An English member of the House of Commons assured me that to his certain knowledge your excellent speech induced no less than thirteen members to change their sentiments on the Catholic question. I fear that you would think me guilty of Irish flattery were I to inform you how dear you are to the Irish Protestants, and how highly they appreciate your wise and spirited exertions in supporting the true interest of the Empire. I may truly say, “Præsentī tibi maturos largimur honores.”’

Of the honours done to Mr. Peel on this occasion the greatest and the most congenial was the recognition of his merits as a rising statesman by the University to which he owed his training. Three weeks only after the debate in which he had rendered to the cause of Protestant ascendancy such signal service, the opportunity occurred. By the retirement of the Speaker (Mr. Abbot, henceforth Lord Colchester) one of the two seats for the University of Oxford fell vacant. Canning, Peel’s senior by eighteen years, and like Peel a member of the leading college, had long aspired to the honour of representing his University in Parliament. But the old-fashioned Oxford Tories had not faith in Canning. The University, by a majority, opposed the Catholic claims. Canning was their champion. This was against him, and before his friends could act, the Chapter and Common-room of Christ Church, apprised by Sir William Scott of the impending vacancy, had declared for Peel. His former tutor, Lloyd, secured the offer of nomination, and carried it through the night to London.

*Mr. Peel to Dr. Cyril Jackson.*

‘May 31, 1817.

‘Early this morning Mr. Lloyd waited upon me, having left Oxford late last night, and delivered to me the letter from Dr. Hall of which I inclose a copy. I hope that you will approve of the course I have pursued in assuring the Dean in reply to his letter that there is no object on earth that would be so gratifying to me as to be the representative of the University of Oxford.’

With characteristic promptitude and courage Peel in person was the first to impart the news to another apprehended rival and to Canning, both of whom received the announcement with good humour.

*Mr. Peel to Rev. Charles Lloyd.*

‘Saturday, May 31, 1817.

‘I went to Lord Liverpool, and saw him in bed this morning. I am sure he was gratified by the communication I had received from Christ Church.

‘From Lord Liverpool’s I went to Vansittart, who bore his disappointment (if he was disappointed) with great equanimity, and very cordially wished me joy.

‘I then considered it due to Mr. Canning to wait upon him. I thought he was surprised, and unprepared to expect the communication I made to him. He congratulated me upon it, and observed that it was decisive so far as Christ Church was concerned, and that he did not suppose there would be any serious opposition in other quarters.’

The following letters relate to the same subject.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘May 31, 1817.

‘I presume I shall have no competitor from Christ Church, as Canning, who had considerable hopes, I believe, and Vansittart will not, I fancy, give me any trouble. I have seen them this morning.’

*Mr. Peel to Dr. Cyril Jackson.*

‘June 2, 1817.

‘A thousand thanks for both your letters. Though the first of them tells me that you cannot be of any assistance to me, every line of it is animated with a spirit of kindness and affectionate regard, which would completely have reconciled me to that abstinence from interference of the prudence and policy of which I am fully satisfied.

‘You were quite right in thinking that the Dean had little influence in the College, as he found the exertions

which he very sincerely and honestly made in favour of Canning quite unavailing. I am under the greatest obligations to Lloyd and to Mr. Corne.

‘If I succeed I shall have attained the paramount object of my ambition, one to which I should have looked forward as the ample reward of a long political life. And I trust in God that my success, though it may make me undervalue the usual objects to which political men aspire, will stimulate me to those exertions by which alone I can prove myself worthy of the confidence which the most distinguished Body on earth has been pleased to confer on me.’

*Mr. Peel to Rev. W. Corne.*

‘June 2, 1817.

‘Though I experienced when at Christ Church the utmost kindness from you, still I stood in no relation to you which could entitle me to expect that preference which naturally springs from the partialities of intimate friendship. On some political subjects I fear I have the misfortune to differ from you in opinion, and, notwithstanding, I have received from you an aid equally generous and powerful, and which, precisely in the same degree in which it is honourable to you, is gratifying to me, and to all that take an interest in what concerns me.’

*Mr. Peel to Rev. C. Lloyd.*

‘Tuesday, June 3, 1817.

‘I do not think the paragraph in the “Chronicle” made much if any impression here. In general, I disapprove of all authorised insertions in the newspapers, and still more of those that are unauthorised, but privately encouraged by the parties to whom they refer. I am (from long experience in Ireland) callous to newspaper abuse, as there are few crimes of which I am not accused once a week on an average; but newspaper praise is galling. I felt the paragraph yesterday to be of so little importance that I spoke to Canning in the House respecting it, and we were laughing

at it. His observation was, "The 'Chronicle' wishes to make mischief if it can, but so far as I am concerned it will completely fail."

'Surely in the University it would be notorious that I am selected by Christ Church without previous communication, direct or indirect, between me and any resident member of the University.

'P.S.—You may always write to me without reserve. I shall receive with gratitude any advice, and will consider every communication made in the strictest confidence.

'June 9.—I leave without an attempt at acknowledgment all you have done for me within the last fortnight. I treat you as I should my father or my brother—consider all your zeal and all the warmth of your attachment so natural, so like what I experienced some nine or ten years since, when I was aspiring to a distinction in the University which I coveted then almost as earnestly as I have since coveted another and a higher distinction, that I forget to thank you, or at least feel assured that you are as sensible of my gratitude as I am of your kindness.'

'June 11.—As to fighting Mr. O'Connell, I believe it would be a much more difficult matter to have that satisfaction than you are probably aware of.'

*Mr. Peel to the Dean of Christ Church (Dr. Hall).*

'Irish Office: June 11, 1817.

'I shall have the honour of paying my respects to you on Saturday morning, and will then, with your permission, go round with you to the several colleges. I was aware that your wishes in the first instance were for the success of Mr. Canning, and nothing could be more natural. But from my past experience of your kindness when at Oxford, I had not a doubt that, if the success of him on whose behalf you were most interested was unattainable, I should receive your sincere congratulations on an event which has given me more satisfaction than I have ever felt, or ever again can feel.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

‘June 16, 1817.

‘I took my seat for Oxford on Friday, had the Insurrection Act till twelve o’clock on that night, breakfasted at Oxford at nine on Saturday morning, left it last night (Sunday) at eight o’clock, have two Bills to introduce to-night, and must be at Oxford again to-morrow at two, and in London on Wednesday. I had thoughts of proceeding from Oxford to Ireland, but I will wait here at single anchor, as perhaps I may be of more use here than in Ireland. There indeed I can be of little service; you can manage as well without me as with me; but one always wishes for one’s own sake to be at the post when there is difficulty.’

About the same time Mr. Peel arranged the purchase of a seat in Parliament for his brother William, and the admission at Christ Church of a younger brother, John.

*Mr. Peel to Sir Robert Peel.*

‘Irish Office: May 29, 1817.

‘Lord Mount Edgcumbe showed every disposition to bring in William for Bossiney, in the place of Desart. He observed that the election was attended with some considerable expense, and referred me to his agent for details. The cost of it will be 1,000*l.*, but I hope you will think that no objection. William is now twenty-eight years of age, and I am sure no one is better aware than you are of the comparative advantage of coming into Parliament at an early period of life. He can have no other occupation so likely to be of service to him, or so likely to be agreeable and useful at the same time, as occupation in Parliament. I defy a man to attend it, and not to benefit by it, by listening to the discussion of subjects involving in their consideration the various and complicated interests of the relations internal and external of his native country.

‘In every point of view it appears to me desirable that the opportunity should not be lost. So far as Tamworth is

concerned, I think it desirable. If you approve, I will move the writ on Friday.'

*Mr. Peel to Rev. C. Lloyd.*

'Sept. 6, 1817.

'Have the goodness to let me know on what day my brother should make his appearance at Christ Church. I desired him some time since to make himself master of his Euclid, and I hope you will find him well grounded in everything. He has a great desire to distinguish himself. I wish him to enter as a gentleman commoner.

'I must indulge my vanity a little, and send you the document which was the chief motive that led me, contrary to my own wishes and inclination, to abandon my intention of quitting the office of Chief Secretary at the same time that Lord Whitworth relinquishes that of Lord Lieutenant.'

*(Inclosure.)*

*Address to Mr. Peel from Irish Members.*

*(Presented June 30, 1817.)*

'To the Right Honourable Robert Peel, Chief Secretary for Ireland.

'Sir,—Five years have now elapsed during which you have advised and conducted the executive affairs of Ireland, as Minister of that country, with a zeal and diligence so disinterested, a firmness so manly, an impartiality so strictly unshaken, and with talents so eminently conspicuous, that you have merited our warmest gratitude, and would have acquired the entire approbation of every subscriber to this letter, but for the contrariety of opinion which prevails among ourselves on the question of the Roman Catholic claims.

'Admitting, however, to you, as we must do to each other, the influence of conscientious conviction on this momentous question, we are persuaded it will not interfere with your upright discharge of public duty.

'Impressed with the sentiment that your public services in Ireland are of the utmost value, we may be permitted to express our ardent hope and earnest entreaty that no

change of persons which may at this time be contemplated in the Government there shall induce you to decline a continuance in your present situation.

‘ You, who have now made yourself perfectly acquainted with the course of measures fitted to the better administration of government in Ireland, who have projected many and have already executed some very important improvements in the internal policy of the country, cannot be surprised that those who feel sincerely anxious for the advancement of society in education, industry, and morals, should view with deep regret that the care of these most interesting concerns should be transferred to other superintendence, before further progress shall have been made towards their perfection.

‘ Although we do not presume to urge or expect that inducements arising out of personal friendship to any of ourselves can influence your decision upon the object of our solicitation, yet we cannot omit this occasion to express the high gratification we enjoy in having acquired an intimate knowledge of a character which we esteem for private worth as much as we admire it for public virtue.

‘ YARMOUTH, &c.’

[Fifty-nine signatures.]

The remaining letters of interest in this year relate to Ireland.

*Lord Palmerston to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Stanhope Street : Aug. 19, 1817.

‘ Could you tell me generally whether you think there is any probability of a contest for the county of Sligo at the next election ? I could at the present moment make from 280 to 290 voters by giving leases to tenants who are now holding at will. If there is any chance of their being of use next year, I will do so forthwith, and register them in time. If not, I should perhaps postpone giving twenty-one years’ leases till matters look a little more propitious to the payment of rents.’



*Mr. Peel to Sir John Newport.*

‘ July 19, 1817.

‘ I concur with you so entirely in the opinion you express with respect to the impolicy of preventing the emigration of mechanics and artificers, who think they can by emigration better their condition, that I have desired that the proclamations enforcing the law upon that subject be withdrawn, and that they should not be repeated.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘ Dublin Castle : Oct. 7, 1817.

‘ Upon the whole I think this country is (for Ireland) in a very satisfactory condition. I do not recollect it to have been so tranquil for five years past, and we have every prospect of abundance both of fuel and provisions.

‘ Tranquillity must not, however, be expected to vary in a direct ratio with plenty. The severe distress of last winter was not without its effect in promoting peace and good order. The lower classes became in many parts completely dependent upon the bounty of their wealthier neighbours, and soon found the policy of fortifying their claims to compassion by peaceable behaviour. I consider it fortunate too that the Government had an opportunity which rarely occurs of coming in contact with the public through the medium of kind offices. The period at which we granted assistance in aid of local subscriptions was well chosen. It was a short time before the season at which relief would be naturally derived from the produce of the present year. The pressure was most severe because the supply was nearly exhausted, and when the new crop became available and the pressure was gradually relieved, the people attributed their relief in a much greater degree to the intervention of Government than they ought to have done.’

‘ Oct. 31.—Many persons will tell you that we have already reduced the force in Ireland too low, but that is not my opinion. I think much further reductions may

ultimately be made, and some in the estimates for next year.'

'Nov. 21.—I have no doubt that the peace establishment may be ultimately reduced to 18,000 men. It would not perhaps be prudent to make so considerable a reduction in one year, and I propose to place the establishment for the ensuing year at 20,000. I shall be much obliged to you to have the necessary communication made to the Horse Guards.'

*Mr. Peel to the High Sheriff of King's County in answer to a Complimentary Memorial.*

'Dublin Castle: Oct. 14, 1817.

'I have always felt that Ireland has strong and peculiar claims upon the Legislature for the favourable consideration of her interests, and with that impression, and a firm conviction that the Empire at large is benefited by every improvement in the condition of Ireland, I have been a humble but an earnest advocate of her cause in Parliament. There also I have felt it to be my duty to state my opinion upon that important subject which is referred to in the concluding part of the Address, upon which I have the misfortune to differ from many for whom I have a high respect, and from some to whom I am bound by ties of the closest personal regard. However strong that opinion may be, and however unreservedly I may have expressed it in that place, where alone I am called upon to express it, I trust it has never diverted me from an impartial and unprejudiced discharge of my duty. I always have felt, and always shall feel, the sincerest wishes for the prosperity and happiness of every class of his Majesty's subjects in Ireland, without preference or distinction.'

On December 17, 1817, at a full meeting of the inhabitants of Carrick-on-Suir, resolutions were unanimously carried: (1) 'To thank Mr. Peel for the promptitude with which he had sent aid for the poor in the district labouring under infectious fever, and for the immediate consideration given by Government to their former

application in the almost unexampled scarcity of last summer, from which the poor derived the most essential benefit.' (2) 'That the administration of the Right Hon. Robert Peel (with the single exception of his vote on the subject of Catholic Emancipation) is deserving of our highest approbation, as we feel it has ever been guided by the purest anxiety for the best interests of Ireland.'

In the next year, 1818, Mr. Peel's chief speeches were on Sir Robert Peel's Bill for shortening the hours of labour in cotton factories—a measure vigorously supported by his son, whose effective advocacy was welcomed by the working men with touching gratitude and confidence in his compassion for their suffering children.

*Warrington Cotton Spinners to Mr. Peel.*

' March 27, 1818.

' Sir,—We the cotton spinners and others employed for the cotton mills in Warrington, having observed with peculiar pleasure the very able manner in which you supported the Factory Bill on the second reading, take the liberty now to address a few lines to you, humbly presuming to hope that it will not be in vain for us to solicit your interference once more in our behalf.

' The principal cotton mills here work from half-past five in the morning till half-past eight at night, so that the poor children are called out of bed at five, and it is nine at night when they get home, some of them being under six, many under eight years of age. We feel exquisitely for these in the winter time, coming out of the warm bed, clothed in rags or half naked, through the cold, frost, snow, winds and rain, many of them barefoot, into the hot room, where no air is permitted to enter that can be prevented, as it is injurious in the spinning of cotton.

' Hoping your ardent zeal for our welfare will ultimately be crowned with success, we have the honour &c.'

' April 19.—With sentiments of inexpressible gratitude we received your favour dated 7th instant, an honour far beyond our most sanguine expectations.

' We presume to trouble you with these lines, in order that you may be able to meet our enemy, and we have no doubt of his discomfiture.

‘ Mr. —, who would not allow any of his workpeople to sign our petition, threatening to dismiss anyone that did, sent orders by the overlookers to everyone in his manufactory yesterday, that they must all come clean and bring their best clothes with them in the morning, must stop the works at half-past seven, clean all the machinery, then wash themselves and put on their clean clothes, and all come into the warehouse at nine, where there would be two medical gentlemen who would examine them individually. And there was going to be a law made that all persons who had bad health at present or during the last twelve months must be turned away.

‘ We have had our information from several women and children in his employ, that some of them were up at three o’clock this morning, with their mothers washing their clothes and getting them ready. Others borrowed of their neighbours, having none decent of their own, knowing they should lose their work if they did not. Accordingly they all went into the warehouse, having previously washed and cleaned themselves, and put on their Sunday clothes. About nine o’clock Dr. Moss and Dr. Kendrick examined them. Being forewarned of the inevitable consequence of speaking truth, they all declared themselves in good health, except two.

‘ We understand Mr. — is intending to send a petition against the Bill, though his factory has not worked ten hours per day upon an average for the last three years, sometimes stopping two or three days in a week, sometimes a week or a fortnight at once, and at other times working eight hours per day, just as he finds a market for his goods. When the trade goes well, he compels them to attend fourteen to fifteen hours per day. At present they work from five A.M. to half-past seven P.M., and his spinners are all women and children. He avails himself of the present distressed state of the poor and the scarcity of work, to get them to work for low wages. He has now twenty-seven persons, from six to twenty-one years of age, for twenty-seven shillings per week, that is one shilling each upon an

average. Some say he is sending a letter this evening to Mr. Phillips, M.P., signed by the above physicians; but whether Mr. Phillips presents a petition or mentions the letter, we hope you will answer him. Confiding in your eloquence, humanity, and indefatigable exertions in our cause,

‘ We remain, &c.’

*Mr. H. Campbell to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Manchline, Ayrshire : May 6, 1818.

‘ I have waited with much anxiety the result of the humane Bill which your feeling father has brought into Parliament, and with regret have noticed the opposition which a few selfish individuals guided by narrow interested motives have thrown in its way. Being in the immediate neighbourhood of the celebrated cotton mill of Messrs. Finlay & Co., I have made all the inquiry possible with regard to the health &c. of the workers, and though that is in general pretty good, it by no means corresponds with the account of Mr. Kirkman Finlay. The working hours of the mill are from six in the morning till half-past seven in the evening—bating an hour for dinner and half an hour for breakfast. The whole of the workers seem truly grateful to your worthy father, and sincerely hope he will be successful in his generous plan, but they are so tied down by tyrannical masters and whippers-in, that were they to express their sentiments in favour of the Bill against their employer they would be instantly discharged.

‘ There is no such thing as free labour in Catrine. The immense influx of Irish peasantry added to the native poor gives masters a more absolute supremacy over the distressed creatures who are driven by necessity to seek employment in cotton mills, and consequently obliges those who are in to submit to oppressive measures.

‘ There are children in Catrine cotton mill that are not seven years of age! If Mr. Peel requires them, I can send their names.’

Founding his arguments on such communications and on his own knowledge, Mr. Peel helped on the Bill at every stage, availing himself also of the right to speak on presenting a petition. He appealed to common humanity against working children seven years old in a heated and sometimes polluted atmosphere for fourteen hours a day. Replying to Lord Stanley, who took the lead in moving the rejection of the Bill, he denied that the labour was 'free,' even in the sense that parents had an option. They were compelled, he said, to let their children work the same hours as the men, or not at all. As regards the education said to be given, he characterised the arrangement by which the children were not sent to school until they had been exhausted with thirteen or fifteen hours of labour as disgusting. And lastly, in answer to assertions that 'no place was more healthy than a cotton mill,' resorting to the 'ridiculum, acri fortius,' he admitted that, if all they urged were true, doubtless, when the poet asked—

Within what mountain's craggy cell  
Delights the goddess Health to dwell ?

or—

In what dim and dark retreat  
The coy nymph fixed her favourite seat ?

it might be answered, 'In the cotton mill of Messrs. Finlay & Co. in Glasgow,' its salubrity being, according to the evidence, six times as great as that of the most healthy part of the kingdom.

At this time Mr. Peel, in private, dissented strongly from the policy of the Cabinet in proposing fresh grants to the Royal Family. Owing to the sad death in childbirth of the Princess Charlotte, the aged King had been left without a grandchild or great-grandchild to inherit his throne, and the Prince Regent was living separate from his wife. As a direct consequence among the unmarried Royal Dukes his brothers, matrimony became the order of the day, and so eager was the Prime Minister to promote this by the prospect of increased allowances and outfits that his zeal, in Mr. Peel's opinion, quite outran discretion.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Talbot.*

'London: April 14, 1818.

'The Government has in a most incredible and unaccountable manner got itself into a serious scrape. I never was more surprised than I was yesterday to hear Lord

Liverpool intimate to a very numerous assembly of the supporters of this Administration its intention of proposing to Parliament allowances to the Royal Dukes which there could not be a hope of Parliament acceding to—20,000*l.* outfit to the Duke of Clarence, and besides his present income of 20,000*l.* a year, 20,000*l.* more, with additions to the Dukes of Cambridge and Kent, and above all to the Duke of Cumberland, to make up their incomes to 30,000*l.*

‘A man must be really infatuated who could flatter himself that this House of Commons, now perhaps on the very eve of dissolution, which was prevailed on with the utmost difficulty and after the most unpleasant discussions to grant 60,000*l.* a year additional to the Duke of Cumberland, could be induced now to grant him, two years after his marriage, 12,000*l.* a year more, the Duke’s dress and manner having become in the interval ten times more germanised than they were before, and his beard, whiskers and mustachios making a daily increase of their dominions.

‘There is not a hope, I think, or speaking for myself I must say there is no ground to fear, that these allowances will be granted; and what course the Government will pursue, I cannot conjecture.’

Taught by the House of Commons, the young Chief Secretary was becoming a severe economist.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘Irish Office: April 14, 1818.

‘We must not make the Peelers unpopular, by maintaining them against the declared and unequivocal sense of the county in which they act. The assurance of the Grand Jury of the King’s County quite warrants the Lord Lieutenant in removing the police from that county, but let them pay for the past.’

‘April 20.—Make an immediate communication to the Governors of the Protestant Charter Schools. Desire them not to increase the establishment, to incur no further expense on account of new buildings—of any buildings

whatever. Desire that vacancies in the smaller schools be not filled up at all, and when vacancies occur in the larger schools, the children be transferred from the smaller schools, which will thus be gradually reduced.

‘Inform them that when the Lord Lieutenant considers the much greater expense for a child in these schools than in the Hibernian School or any other such establishment, he cannot but feel strongly the necessity of some material change.

‘Pray see the Governors of the Foundling Hospital, and try to impress them with the absolute necessity of curtailing their admissions, and reducing the expense of that establishment, which for my own part I sincerely wish had never existed.

‘Refer them to their own document sent in with this year’s estimate, in which they observe that there are above 1,100 children to be drafted into the schools, but they cannot be brought from the country on account of the number remaining in the schools, there being scarcely any demand for apprentices! Read this to Renny. He will see at once the monstrous impolicy of a system which throws upon the Government the maintenance of children of whom it is impossible to dispose. The only way of applying a remedy is by the restriction of admissions, and by the entire abolition (gradual, of course) of the whole establishment of country nurses.

‘Really to make the Government of Ireland a nurse is painfully ridiculous. On October 10, 1817, we had 5,072 children at nurse. Between January 1 and October 10, 1817, we sent 1,180 children to nurse. Where is to be the limit of this? If it be right to send one thousand in one year, it is right to send ten thousand, to undertake the charge of nursing the child of every pauper in Ireland. But it is wrong, radically wrong in principle, and for God’s sake do let us have the credit of being enabled to show in next year’s estimate that we have commenced at least the correction of such useless, extravagant, and ridiculous impolicy.’



In works of public charity, however, Mr. Peel was still far from parsimonious when he could rely on his agents.

*Mr. Peel to Sir E. Baker.*

‘Irish Office : May 20, 1818.

‘Additional aid should be granted, I think, without delay to the inhabitants of Monaghan, to enable them to check the renewed progress of fever. Last night the House of Commons voted an additional 15,000*l.* to be expended in the care of fever patients, and the only observation made upon the grant contained a doubt whether it was sufficiently large. I said, if it was not, I would not hesitate to increase it from other funds. I think before the summer comes a great exertion should be made to put down the fever. If it cost 20,000*l.* I care not ; the money will be well expended, when the distribution is committed to those who compose the Fever Committee.’

The time now approached for Mr. Peel’s final departure from Ireland. In February there had been rumours of it, in May he announced his intentions to the Lord Lieutenant, and a few weeks later to his private friends.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. James Daly, M.P.*

‘Irish Office : Feb. 11, 1818.

‘Why report has sent me to Vienna<sup>2</sup> I know not. I have about as much wish to go there as on an embassy to China to perform the Kotou. I am not a very eager politician, and trouble myself little about that sort of distinction which mere office confers. I have not a single personal object to look to. The only one I ever had I attained in being elected member for the University of Oxford.’

<sup>2</sup> Referring apparently to an intended Congress of the Great Powers which took place later at Aix-la-Chapelle.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Talbot.*

‘(Secret and confidential.)

‘House of Commons : May 8, 1818.

‘There is now little doubt that a general election will take place in June, and it becomes necessary for me therefore to determine finally upon my retirement from the office of Chief Secretary, or my continuance in it after the election of a new Parliament. After giving the subject consideration, I feel very strongly disposed to act on the wish I have always expressed to Lord Liverpool, and to close my Irish campaigns with the present Parliament, with which I commenced them six years since, in the year 1812.

‘I mentioned to Lord Liverpool that I thought it very probable that my successor would not wish to encounter his office until the general election was over, and that I might be of material assistance to you at such a period from the knowledge I necessarily must have of local interests, &c. I would on no account withdraw at a moment at which perhaps I may be of greater service to you than at any other. I shall therefore in any event return to Ireland.’

*Lord Talbot to Lord Liverpool.*<sup>3</sup>

‘May 11, 1818.

‘I will not detain your Lordship by the expression of my regrets at this determination, Peel’s great talents and integrity being too universally acknowledged, and much too well known to you, to render my doing so at all necessary.’

‘I have received so much genuine satisfaction as well as kind assistance from him during the short period of our official connection, that I have only to lament that our intercourse has been of such short duration. I am persuaded that his retiring from the office he has so long held in this country will be regarded here almost as a national calamity.’

<sup>3</sup> From Lord Liverpool’s MS. papers.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Talbot.*

‘ May 18, 1818.

‘ You refer to the opinions of Lewis on the Catholic question as an objection to him. I fear this is an objection which equally applies to nearly all if not to all those who may be considered competitors for the office of Chief Secretary. To Goulburn certainly it does not, but he cannot be looked upon as a competitor, for I fear he could not be induced to accept the office. As Lord Liverpool observes, it is most desirable to have a Protestant. But where is there one to be found?’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. James Daly, M.P.*

‘ Irish Office : June 2, 1818.

‘ I shall bid adieu, only officially I hope, however, to Ireland as soon as the general election is over. I had always resolved to quit it at the close of the present Parliament, and I think I behave very handsomely to the Government in volunteering to remain for the elections.’

*Mr. Peel to the Right Hon. W. V. Fitzgerald, M.P.*

‘ June 24, 1818.

‘ Charles Grant has been offered and has accepted the situation of Chief Secretary. Huskisson had a previous offer, it appears, but declined. The chief and only ground on which I regret my relinquishment of office, and the appointment of my successor, is the fear that it will be a fresh source of mortification to you.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Charles Grant, junior, M.P.*

‘ June 26, 1818.

‘ Do not be under any apprehension on account of your unavoidable ignorance of local affairs here on your first arrival. You will find the elections terminated, and you have in the Under Secretary, Mr. Gregory, who necessarily

conducts the business during the absence of the Chief Secretary for half the year in London, a most able and honourable assistant.'

From one quarter Mr. Peel received the flattering assurance that it rested only with himself, if so minded, to supersede Lord Liverpool.

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'Admiralty: July 3, 1818.

'Great regret here at the rumour of your leaving office, which has been attributed in my hearing to dissatisfaction at Robinson's appointment. You need not be told that I did you immediate justice on this point.

'Yarmouth told me last night that you might be Prime Minister whenever you would, and that you should have his hearty support.'

'*July 13.*—Yarmouth said to me, "Croker, I have been thinking of what I have twice already mentioned to you, and we must have Peel Minister. Everybody wishes for him, everybody would support him. Lowther, Apsley, and myself, who are heirs apparent of some weight, in votes at least, would join him heart and hand. I like him personally. I have no other motive than personal liking and public respect, and I should be glad on every account to see him at the head of affairs."'

To all which Peel answered, 'Fudge.'<sup>4</sup> For nine years more he was to serve under his old chief, and when at last the leadership fell vacant, Lord Yarmouth, then Marquis of Hertford, returning to the House of Commons eight members, supported Canning, as did Mr. Croker.

Mr. Peel remained in office now for only one purpose, to conduct the general election in Ireland. His services in that line had been enlisted also nearer home, where Captain Townsend was opposing the return for the first time of two members of the Peel family for Tamworth.

<sup>4</sup> For his letter in full see *Croker Papers*.

*Sir Robert Peel to Mr. Peel.*

‘London: June 10, 1818.

‘I greatly fear that some of our friends have expressed themselves with more warmth than prudence. Our object is by a canvass to increase the number of our friends, and it is the more material for our family where ourselves and offspring may be expected to reside for a century to come. We may by mismanagement lose a seat in Parliament. But by heat and intemperance we may experience a much greater misfortune, and lose the friendship and goodwill of our neighbourhood.

‘I trust your presence at Tamworth will make friends, but at least you will avoid making enemies amongst our friends. You will endeavour to suppress all angry passions, and to keep on good terms with those who on the present occasion may not vote with us. We may want their services on some future occasion.

‘Lord John Townsend behaved, on his visit yesterday to me, in the most friendly manner. He said he was sensible that his family owed to my kindness their seat for the borough of Tamworth in many successive parliaments; and as they had disposed of the whole of their estate in that neighbourhood, he was very much displeased with his nephew for disturbing the town, and wished me and my son William every success.’

On June 10 Parliament had been dissolved, and on June 24 Mr. Peel was able to announce, ‘My brother is returned for Tamworth by a majority of 34, and my father by nearly 100.’

The Irish elections of this year left but little trace in letters. Negotiations, doubtless, were conducted more conveniently by word of mouth. Their successful result was due largely to the integrity and singleness of purpose with which for six years past Mr. Peel had used all diligence so to apply the patronage at his command as to engage the most political support. So all-powerful in Ireland was this engine of government, that in closing the account of his Chief Secretaryship it may be well to illustrate by examples the principles on which, with scrupulous good faith, he had worked a system now regarded as corruption.

Since the peace, from reductions in the establishments, the number of places at the disposal of the Government had been much diminished, while the claims on them had increased.

*Mr. Peel to the Earl of Clare.*

‘Jan. 16, 1816.

‘For the last six months, for one clerk appointed there have been ten reduced, who look to the Government for employment, and numerous claims are preferred by those who, from long service in inferior situations, can strongly appeal to the justice of Government, as well as by those who, from their political relation and support, are best entitled to favour.’

Church patronage also was scarce.

‘Every Bishop with a bad constitution died while the Duke of Richmond was in Ireland. We had eight Sees to dispose of, and Lord Whitworth has had no vacancy in a bishopric or any valuable preferment.’

Nor was Lord Talbot more fortunate. The dearth continued.

‘July 20, 1818.—There is nothing so extraordinary in natural history as the longevity of all bishops, priests, and deacons in Ireland. During the last five years there has literally been no Church preferment to dispose of, to the infinite disappointment of many expectants.’

The Chief Secretary was thus driven to severe economy of his resources, and close accounting with all claimants.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘Jan. 2, 1817.

‘Nothing can prevent the importunity of Lord D., and no answer that you could return to him would put a stop to his applications. Since Lord Whitworth came to Ireland he has scarcely had at his disposal Church preferments the value of which united would equal that of the livings which Mr. B. now holds. If, therefore, Mr. B.’s

character were perfectly unexceptionable, Lord D. could have no right to complain of neglect.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'April 21, 1817.

'Most persons are content in these times with promoting the interest of one brother at a time, but Lord C. sports with a double barrel. As for the one brother, I suppose I may safely go the length of assuring him of all good wishes, after two persons shall have been previously disposed of. Alas! I fear he will benefit little from those good wishes. With respect to the other, I am, at least, heartily glad that there is no chance of my having the benefit of his co-operation; and if ever he should be appointed to the office to which he aspires, I hope he will suit my successor better than he would suit me.

'When G. wants a baronetcy he is very rich, and when he wants a place he is very poor. I think we may fairly turn the tables on him, and when he asks to be a baronet make his poverty the objection, and his wealth when he asks for an office.

'Lord H. has no sort of claim. He and his whole family are more overpaid in point of favour from the Crown than any other in Ireland. He has not an atom of influence, and abilities about equal to his influence.'

When Irish great men tried sometimes to obtain their ends by bluster, the young Chief Secretary replied with spirit, and usually with the effect of bringing them to reason. In particular he stood out jealously against using the scanty current patronage to redeem alleged engagements of old standing.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'Feb. 19, 1815.

'I advised Lord D. to address himself to you, not to Lord Castlereagh, and to found his claims on his own pretensions, whatever they are, and not on old Union promises of Lord Cornwallis, which I told him you would not allow to weigh a feather in the scale.'

'March 9, 1816.—I send you a most audacious letter from Lord D. and a copy of the answer which I have returned to it. If his claims were ten times as strong as they are, and if the person recommended by him had been actually appointed, I think it would have been right to recall the appointment, and not submit to such impertinence.

'If it were merely an impertinent letter to me personally, I receive too many to care the least about it. But when he talks of the Lord Lieutenant being "an agent" and so forth, he really ought to be dismounted.'

(*Inclosure.*)

*Mr. Peel to the Marquis of D.*

'March 9, 1816.

'I lose no time in replying to the letter which your Lordship addressed to me yesterday, and which has little disposed me to become the advocate of your Lordship's claims. Had the Lord Lieutenant previously determined to attend to your Lordship's wishes, I should have advised him to alter his determination, and at once reject claims preferred on such grounds and conveyed in such terms.

'I can give your Lordship no information with respect to the intentions of the Government which carried into effect the union of the two countries. I know not in what relation the Lord Lieutenant of that day stood to the Government, and whether he considered himself "their agent" or not. But I know that Lord Whitworth does not so consider himself, and that he will not be bound by engagements (if such were made) for the disposal of an office fifteen years before it became vacant.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'March 9, 1816.

'Lord D. has just been with me, and is now in the office writing to you. He came to me and professed the greatest regret for the expressions he had made use of, assuring me



that he had no intention of imputing to the present Government any breach of faith. He gives up all claim to the office as a matter of right, and founds his application solely on his political influence and disposition to support the Government.

‘He really is so much annoyed at his own conduct, or appears to be—for he was nearly crying—that I could not help at least forgiving him for his letter to me. He is now taking my advice, and writing a letter to you applying for the office as a favour, which I thought it necessary to require from him as a sort of *amende honorable*, and a propitiation due to the office of Lord Lieutenant. For yourself I know you will care nothing about the matter.

‘The truth is that partly Lord D. is a great blockhead, puffed up with his own importance, meaning no harm, and thinking it good policy to express much more than he feels, and partly he was disposed to try the effect of a little political bullying, which when he finds it unavailing he is perfectly ready to retract.

‘In point of justice, after what has passed, I think you are at liberty to refuse giving him the office; but in point of policy I would advise you to give it to him. His two members have supported us throughout, have attended constantly, and have got nothing.’

In some cases, when the Government was hard pressed, the payments for support were undisguised.

‘*Jan.* 15, 1816.—Mr. O. wrote to me the other day that he thought it an abominable policy to reward those who opposed the Government in critical times. I answered him, referring to his own vote on the proceedings under the Convention Act, that I entirely agreed with him.’

‘*March* 8.—It would be good policy to direct the channel of patronage as plentifully as we can towards those who are adhering to us on these pressing questions of army establishments and property tax.’

‘*May* 29, 1817.—As C. has been constant in his attend-

ance and support, and really gives us very little trouble, I think his *protégé* should be appointed to the Customs House place vacant.'

But, as a rule, Mr. Peel refused to enter into bargains.

*Mr. Peel to Colonel C., M.P.*

'Jan. 10, 1816.

'I am rather surprised that you should have been led to expect from your conversations with me upon the subject that Lord F. would be promoted in the peerage, as my object was to discourage any such expectation, and to convince you that Lord Whitworth never had recommended, and never considered himself entitled to recommend, advancement in the peerage with the view of strengthening the influence of any political friend.'

The Colonel having returned a defiant answer, Mr. Peel waited till he next made a request, and then wrote.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'March 1, 1816.

'Advert to Colonel C.'s letter to me of Feb. 3, and say that it was shown to the Lord Lieutenant, who cannot consider him entitled to the favours of the Government after that declaration of his intentions, as he cannot give him the least expectation of Lord F.'s promotion, which appears to be the condition of his support.'

*Mr. Peel to Colonel C., M.P.*

'Dublin Castle: July 18, 1817.

'You observe that it is possible you may not require the favour solicited, that if Lord F. does not come into your proposal you will give me no further trouble. I am sure a moment's reflection will convince you that it would neither be consistent with the duty of Government, nor with the dignity of the peerage, to make an advance in it

dependent on the will of a private individual, and contingent upon his receiving support at an election. I am, therefore, under the necessity of informing you, in reply to the question to which you require a candid answer, that the Lord Lieutenant cannot comply with your wishes, and that I acquiesce in the propriety of the decision.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'March 18, 1816.

'As to the alleged promise of a pension of 1,000*l.* a year to Lady F., I know nothing. You have made it impossible for anyone to complain of the abuse of the pension list. No member of Parliament has benefited by it, no vote has been influenced by it, and if a member should be benefited hereafter, of all members the man actually indebted to the Government for his seat should not be the first. I conclude that the report that F. is to absent himself on the property tax is utterly unfounded. It comes on this night.'

'April 29.—Sir A. B. hinted Lord D.'s readiness to return a friend of the Government, if a promise were given of the next ribbon to Lord D. and of a baronetage to C. I laughed at such a monstrous proposition, and said he might return whom he pleased.'

'May 20.—I really think you have nothing whatever to accuse yourself of in the distribution of the Pension Fund. I do not think there are any three years in the whole period of the Irish history during which so honest a use has been made of it.

'It is not intended to be solely and exclusively the reward of public service. Parliament has given other means (generally speaking) for the remuneration of those who had spent their lives in that service. Some Lords Lieutenant have looked upon the Pension Fund as one out of which they might, to quote an expression of one of them, "make ducks and drakes." I do not quite agree in this opinion, but I think it would be very hard and unjust if the

Chief Governor of Ireland were to be debarred from doing any act of grace and favour towards those in whose behalf he is most interested.'

*Mr. Peel to the Right Hon. W. V. Fitzgerald.*

'Dublin Castle: Nov. 24, 1817.

'V. called here to-day. He saw purposely Gregory. He said he understood it was my wish to see him with respect to the county of Clare, that he saw no object in my seeing him unless we could *understand* each other, and in short without hesitation or shame he proved that he is just as corrupt a dealer in votes as any wretched attorney in Clare or Galway. He said that he would make no promise of his interest unless he received a pledge from me that his two brothers should be provided for, one in the Church, and the other advanced in the profession of the law. Gregory observed that he would not undertake to speak for me, but thought it very improbable that I would enter into any specific engagement of the nature of a regular purchase of a county interest. V. said there would then be no use in my seeing him.

'He must be a most profligate fellow. Perhaps I had better not see him for the present, as my declining to deal with him might induce him to make some promise to Lord C. I might let him know that he had no chance of effecting his objects with Government unless he acted according to their wishes, but I need not tell you that I could not conscientiously give him such a pledge as he requires.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'Irish Office: April 14, 1818.

'I never considered Lord C. at all "unfriendly to the Government." He wanted long since to make terms with me for his support in Cork, pretended to be a sort of delegate from the independent interest there, and wished to be one of a committee for superintending the patronage of the

county. I declined forming any alliance with him, was very civil to him, begged he would vote as he pleased, was perfectly sure he would do what was right. In short, I avowed a confidence in his independence which I am afraid was less acceptable than a little doubt upon that point might have been. Let him remain where he is.'

In this method of selecting public servants, efficiency (except for posts of great importance) was hardly even a secondary object. Incompetence did not disqualify, unless combined with gross neglect of duty. Witness the following frank avowals.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'Feb. 18, 1815.

'Pole is constantly pressing K. of the Navigation Board for promotion. Find out what is and what has been his attendance for the last year. I am told he entirely neglects his duty. Pole readily admits his hopeless stupidity and unfitness for office.'

'Feb. 21, 1816.—I do not think your son can make a more inefficient member of the Board of Stamps than Mr. T. has done. I am perfectly ready, therefore, to acquiesce in the exchange; but with that candour which always will prevail in our communications, I tell you fairly that I should have thought it on the whole a better arrangement if your son had retained for a time the tidewaiter's place, and if T. had been put into the Board of Works, purposely with the view of appointing one man of application and habits of business to that house of incurables, the Board of Stamps.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'Feb. 29, 1816.

'I make a great sacrifice when I say that I doubt whether O.'s habits would qualify him for such practical duties as the Collector of Belfast at least ought to perform.

'Belfast is so flourishing a town, and contributes so much to the revenue, that I fear the collectorship of it is too prominent a situation to place in it a young man who, with all

his good qualities and ability—and I give him credit for both—we must admit to be a ruined man by gambling. Considering how careless he has been of his own money, perhaps some office not connected with the collection of the public money, and requiring incessant vigilance to prevent fraud, would be more suited for him. If you should determine to snatch this office out of the vortex of local patronage, it might be made instrumental perhaps in providing for him.'

'*March 2.*—For Belfast, what do you think of the following arrangement? Make J. Collector, for this very bad and very good reason, that he is the most inefficient Commissioner, and therefore the public service will suffer least from his appointment. Make Colonel H. a Commissioner, he will be about as inefficient as J. Make R. M. junior, the most inefficient of the three, Surveyor of Lands *vice* H., which (though he will lose 200*l.* a year) will greatly oblige his father, the member, and lastly fulfil your good intentions towards O. by making him a Commissioner of Accounts *vice* M. I really believe that O. will make an excellent Commissioner of Accounts—if he would apply, I am sure he would, and might render great public service. M. is ridiculously incompetent.'

Neither was incapacity the worst fruit of patronage which made the first consideration not the fitness of the man to be appointed, but the claims of the man to be obliged. At the present day, applicants for public employment are called on to produce good evidence as to moral character, and anyone in that respect unfit is found out and rejected. Far otherwise was it in Peel's time in Ireland. It might be hoped that as a rule patrons, from principle or public spirit, would not nominate rascals; it was to be feared that, from party exigencies or mere carelessness, they sometimes would; from one cause or another, it is plain they did, and frequent cases came to light of scandalous dishonesty. Mr. Peel probably saw this to be the natural result of paying little or no attention to the wholesome maxim, '*Detur digniori.*' When warned, he inexorably opposed the appointment of any man of known bad character. He expected strict integrity, and sternly punished all unrighteousness and fraud.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘May 10, 1815.

‘Two officers of the Revenue have acted with common honesty, or rather have abstained from acts of dishonesty, and Hawthorne says these are extraordinary cases, which are deserving of some marked favour of Government. What a picture! I would never have consented to R.’s being made an Inspector-General because he refused a bribe of 100*l.*, or to the grant of money to H. because he (with the peculiar inducements he has to be on his guard) was not such a consummate fool as to put himself into the hands of a gauger for 50*l.*’

‘Nov. 7.—Mr. A. gives but a lame justification of himself. Through fear of the Brownes he suffered two unfortunate women to be transported, and says he took measures in order that the Government might hear indirectly of this iniquitous transaction. His measures, however, failed, for if that madman Sir N. O’D. had not reported the circumstances, we should have known nothing about them.

‘The Sheriff made no defence, but probably told a falsehood, which I shall detect if it be one. The fact that the nephew, who is, I suppose, a voter, was to get the unfortunate creature’s property at her departure, makes the whole case worse than ever. It is quite melancholy to read her letter recommending her child, if she herself does not get her liberty, ‘which she is afraid she will not do, as she has no person to look to for justice.’ But if it is in my power to get justice for her she shall have it.’

*Mr. Peel to the Right Hon. J. O. Vandeleur.*

‘April 27, 1816.

‘I am very much obliged to you for your letter respecting the shameful abuses which have been discovered with respect

to the sale of the office of gaoler. I will consider of the application of a remedy without delay.'

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'Oct. 4, 1816.

'I must give you the trouble of reading the inclosed letter. I think it right that you should see how things are managed at some of the Irish boards.

'Don't let my friend's name escape you; he would be ruined if it were thought he ventured to complain of his assistants not being trustworthy. But it is extraordinary that at the moment he is complaining of the want of talents or fidelity of his first clerk, that clerk should get an augmentation which raises him above the principal.

'The question of salary, however, is not what gives rise to anxiety. He is alarmed at his own situation, placed in a responsible office with assistants whom he cannot trust, and who appear to be in the gang with the late head of the office dismissed for peculation.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

'Oct. 8, 1816.

'I have no difficulty in giving advice to F. Let him represent the conduct of his subordinate officers precisely in the terms in which it ought to be represented. Let him be perfectly indifferent to the consequences which may ensue to W. or anyone else, and make such a report as shall compel the Board of Excise to communicate the matter to the Government. It is not only the most proper, but the most safe line of conduct for him to pursue.

'He apprehends, perhaps not unnaturally, the enmity of his superiors, and the future consequences of that enmity. But I will take care to make Gregory, who is a permanent officer, aware of the whole transaction, and should any disposition manifest itself hereafter to injure F., Gregory will be able to account for it and to counteract it. I wish I were at liberty to act upon F.'s letter.'



*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘March 3, 1817.

‘It reflects some discredit upon us that these shameful abuses have been committed. Let every party concerned in or conniving at their commission—sheriffs, inspectors, and the whole tribe—be proceeded against with the utmost rigour of the law. I care not who they are, but let nothing be left untried to compel them to refund that of which they have defrauded the public, and to inflict condign punishment upon them.’

‘April 16.—Every commission that sits in Ireland makes such disclosures with respect to men in public offices, that for the character of the country and the security of the Crown and the public it is absolutely necessary that such instances as this should not pass without severe punishment.’

*Mr. Peel to the Attorney-General (Saurin).*

‘May 3, 1817.

‘I am very sorry that I do not feel the force of your reasoning with respect to P. You object to the course which I propose of removing him from situations which imply that he has the confidence of the Crown, but you propose no other course which appears to me at all satisfactory. You observe that he stands indicted but not finally convicted, but you say nothing with respect to the mode of trying him upon this indictment.

‘Before whom is he to be tried? The evidence given to the Commissioners is on oath. It is his own evidence. If it were the evidence of other persons, it might be right to hear what he has to say in answer, but what can he say in answer to his own? He did that which an honest confidential servant of the public should not have done, and if I cannot recover from him the fruits of his dishonesty, I may surely take upon me to withdraw my confidence from him. I cannot be responsible for any further issue of public money to him. I have so written to Gregory.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.**(Inclosing a copy of the previous letter.)*

‘ May 3, 1817.

‘ May I trouble you to read this with respect to the case of P.? I think we are acting improperly in not instantly dismissing him, after the shameful frauds he has committed on the Government and the public, and the shameful prevarication, if not perjury, which appears in his evidence.

‘ I cannot be responsible for his continuance in office. I cannot as an honest man defend it in Parliament. Pray let me know whether I am authorised to state that he has been suspended, that every sort of connection between him and the Crown has been dissolved for the present, and that he is not dismissed because it is thought fit to give him an opportunity of urging anything he may have to urge in his defence.

‘ Observe, my most decided opinion is in favour of his dismissal. I am quite tired of and disgusted with the shameful corruption which every Irish inquiry brings to light.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. W. R. Burrows.*

‘ May 19, 1817.

‘ I presume we are exclusively indebted to the information B. procured for us for the recovery of the sums to which he refers. I feel strongly the policy of handsomely rewarding those who expose themselves to all the evils attending the disclosure of scenes of iniquity in Ireland.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Goulburn, M.P.*

‘ Dublin Castle : Oct. 13, 1817.

‘ I was sure that Lord Bathurst never would have appointed Mr. W. had he been aware of the circumstances under which he had been dismissed here for the grossest corruption. Mr. W. was the superior officer of a department of the Excise which had the control over the officers

employed in the collection of the Assessed Taxes. In this department and in every branch of it was discovered, to quote the words of the Board of Excise, "a most alarming and extensive system of corrupt collusion." It appeared, on investigation, that the collectors had been in the habit of appropriating to their own use part of the taxes which they received from the public, and of paying to Mr. W. sums of money as a condition of his passing their accounts. Mr. W. has what is called here "very powerful interest;" he is connected with many respectable families, and many attempts were made to save him from the disgrace of dismissal. I was extremely sorry that a severer example could not be made.'

It is satisfactory to note that the practice of selling public offices, and the tyranny of dismissing civil servants for their political action, both of which Mr. Peel opposed, were dying out, condemned by parliamentary opinion.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'I see great objections to permitting the sale of the office held by S. T. purchased his office in the Customs with the sanction of the Government. He now wishes to sell it again, but I never would listen to the proposition. I think the Government that gave him the permission to purchase acted most improperly. The sale by S. would constitute a most embarrassing precedent. By parity of reasoning every officer in every department who purchased on corrupt terms, and is now living, may claim a right to sell the office so purchased.'

*Mr. Peel to Sir F. Flood.*

'March 7, 1816.

'If you had simply asked me for a tidewaiter's place, I should have been glad to comply with your wishes. But you have put it out of my power by sending me a letter which shows that the object in seeking the appointment is to transfer, under a stamped agreement, the salary to

another officer, who is thus to receive the salary of two tidewaiters for doing the duty of one. I am sure you cannot expect on consideration that I can sanction such an agreement.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Whitworth.*

'June 5, 1817.

'With respect to a payment out of the salary of the office to R., I can have no scruple in giving you my opinion that it would not be right. I have never been, and cannot conscientiously be, a party to an arrangement of that kind, because I think this is quite clear, that if the salary of the office is disproportionate to the labour of it, and can bear to be taxed to the amount of 200*l.*, the public should benefit, and the emoluments of the office be reduced.

'I do violence to my private feelings in strongly objecting to this, but I am sure that I am right in dissuading you from establishing the first precedent during your administration of an expenditure of public money which would not bear the light.

'As for dismissing revenue officers, surely Lord C. would hardly propose that a man should be removed for not promising to vote for him, and you will probably not be in Ireland when the actual offence of not voting is committed. He must, therefore, apply to other quarters for the punishment of it. I believe, however, that there was not a single instance at the last general election of such a punishment being inflicted for such an offence.'

*Mr. Peel to the Earl of G.*

'(Private and confidential.)

'Dublin Castle: July 3, 1818.

'I presume by "taking a decisive step" with respect to Mr. J. you mean that I should write him a letter threatening him with removal from office on account of his interference against you. Surely you must be aware that such a letter would completely place me in his hands, and subject me to the severest animadversion of the House of Commons.'

As the day drew near for Mr. Peel's departure, there passed between him and one of his chief Irish opponents in Parliament graceful and manly letters of farewell.

*Mr. Peel to the Right Hon. Sir John Newport.*

' July 1, 1818.

' I cannot close this, probably the last letter which as Chief Secretary I may address to you, without expressing the great satisfaction I derive from the reflection that, notwithstanding adverse party connections, and (I fear) our irreconcilable difference on the most important question that concerns this country, there have still been many, of minor perhaps, but of great importance, on which I have had the good fortune to concur with you. I beg leave to return you my best acknowledgments, which have at least the recommendation of sincerity, for the fairness and openness of your hostility when we have differed, and for the zealoussness of your co-operation on those more frequent occasions on which we have agreed in opinion.'

*Sir John Newport to Mr. Peel.*

' (Private.)

' Newpark: July 5, 1818.

' I can with perfect sincerity assure you that I have not often received a more unwelcome letter than your last, as it announced to me an event which, as a hearty well-wisher to my native country, I had hoped rather than expected would be much longer deferred. I feel very gratefully the liberal manner in which you have viewed and expressed your opinion of my public conduct, both now and at all times when an opportunity presented itself. It has seldom happened, as I believe, that men immersed in political discussion as we have been, and I fear radically differing on the most serious question which affects the interests of the country to which our attention has been particularly directed, have continued, as I trust we shall long continue, to think mutually well of the motives which actuate their public conduct.

‘ To a large proportion of the measures which you have brought forward respecting Ireland, I have, as I felt myself bound to do, borne willing testimony that I viewed them as calculated to effect much public benefit. But in particular Ireland has to thank you for your earnest endeavours to recall us to the use of civil in place of military force for the execution of the laws.’

A few days later, in high spirits on his approaching emancipation, Mr. Peel writes to Lord Whitworth.

‘ This is the hottest day I remember in Ireland. Old women say there must be a rebellion this year, for it is as hot as it was in 1798. However, as I leave Ireland in a fortnight, I hope to close my accounts without one.’

On Friday, July 31, were written his last letters from Dublin Castle.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘ Grant arrived here on Friday last, and is now with me. Of course I have given and shall give him every information and assistance in my power. I have prevailed on Mr. Streatfield, my private secretary, to remain with Mr. Grant in that capacity, and I am thus enabled to leave with him without reserve, for such time as he may want it, the whole of my private correspondence.’

*Mr. Peel to the Right Hon. J. Beckett.*

‘ I quit Ireland on Monday, and (to tell you the truth) think of my departure, or I should say of my resignation, with undiminished and unqualified satisfaction. I hope Grant is as happy on receiving the appointment as I am in relinquishing it.’

On August 3, 1818, Mr. Peel vacated the Chief Secretary’s office, and sailed from Donaghadee, never to return to Irish shores. But Irish questions did not cease to interest and engage, sometimes to haunt and harass, and throw most grave responsibility upon him, in or out of office, for the long remainder of his public life.

## CHAPTER IX.

- 1818-1822.

Holidays in the Highlands—Currency Committee—The Catholic Question—Protestants defeated—Mr. Peel twice declines Cabinet Rank—Accepts Office as Home Secretary—Ireland under a Catholic Viceroy and a Catholic Attorney-General—Saurin discarded—Canning's Bill for admitting Catholics to the Upper House—Opposed by Peel—Peel and the King—Prerogative of Mercy—Royal Visit to Scotland—Death of Lord Londonderry.

AFTER labour, rest. For eight years in office Mr. Peel, acting on the advice of Dean Cyril Jackson, had worked 'like a tiger.' For the next three years and a half he was out of office, wrote fewer letters, and (having no private secretary) kept hardly any record of them. The twelfth of August (1818) found him in the Scottish Highlands, revelling in field sports, and in well-earned repose.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

' Drayton Manor: Oct. [?] 1818.

' From Ireland I went to Scotland, and remained five weeks among the mountains of the Badenoch district. Daly, my brother [William], Colonel Yates, and I were of the party. We had one of the best houses in Inverness-shire, a modern castle. We had an enormous district of country, plenty of grouse, of which we slew about thirteen hundred, and I took my cook there, to gild the decline of day.

' We had supreme dominion, so far as the chase is concerned, over uncounted thousands of acres. Loch Ericht, and Loch Laggan, and Loch Dhu, and the streams from a thousand hills, were ours. We had hind and hart, hare and roe, black game and grouse, partridge and ptarmigan, snipe and wild duck. We had Highlanders for our guides, and

Highland ponies without shoes, and no civilised beings within ten miles of us.

‘I really left Cluny with regret. There was so much novelty in the mode of life, so much wildness and magnificence in the scenery, so much simplicity and unaffected kindness among the people.’

Among the few papers of this date are several letters of interest from Mr. Peel to his friends Lloyd and Gregory, returned to him after their deaths. Of those to Lloyd, eight are on his candidature for the Preachership of Lincoln’s Inn, in furtherance of which his grateful pupil worked for him untiringly, discreetly, and with success.

*Mr. Peel to Rev. Charles Lloyd.*

‘ Stanhope Street : May 19, 1818.

‘ There is nothing within my power which I will not do to promote the object which you have in view. If I tell you how sincerely I wish you success, and how earnestly I will co-operate with you to promote it, I shall offend that honourable and manly pride—*superbiam quæsitam meritis*—which would, I know, compel you to reject every effort of private friendship that was not equally stimulated by a conviction of your qualifications for every appointment for which you may be a candidate.

‘ If I had felt so little interest in your success since I left the University as to make no inquiry concerning your character and station in it—had I been so callous, so unlike yourself, as not to have watched with delight the growing reputation of one of my earliest and dearest friends—still I know too well the independence of your spirit, not to know that you would not give yourself the trouble of asking for an appointment for which you were not, if I may use such a phrase, notoriously qualified.

‘ No circumstances can occur, no pledge can have been given to others by Lord Liverpool, which can prevent me from exerting on your behalf whatever influence I may possess. I consider myself perfectly free from every



political obligation, and at liberty to take publicly or privately any course I may think fit.'

When Parliament met, Mr. Peel had the honour of proposing for election as Speaker his friend Mr. Manners Sutton, and on February 22 he took the leading part in answering an able speech by Mr. Tierney against an annual grant from the Civil List of 50,000*l.* for the Royal Establishment at Windsor. A speech on that occasion by Scarlett, Mr. Peel describes as 'sophistry, but excellent sophistry.' Of practical rhetoric, he was still, as in his Oxford days, a close observer and an eager student.

*Mr. Peel to Rev. C. Lloyd.*

'House of Commons: Feb. 25, 1819.

'Pray tell me what you consider the best specimen, not exactly of reasoning, but of that part of reasoning which is occupied in confutation of your adversary's arguments.

'I want, as I have often told you, from reading much of polemics, to endeavour to form some general principle of arguing and reply. Locke touches upon the subject, but he leaves it directly. Chillingworth is capital, but he is too close, and sets about it much too logically for these times. I find much the best reasoning in divinity—disputatious reasoning I mean. There is an answer of Warburton to Boyle and Shaftesbury (prefixed to the "Divine Legation," I think) that is good. I do not want to read for information on the subject; at least that is not my chief object. What I want is subtle reasoning in reply. I care not if the book is on alchemy.

'There is not half reasoning enough in politics—not half. Burke's speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts is good, for he sets out with a distinct enumeration of the arguments of his opponents.'

Other letters to Lloyd relate chiefly to the Currency. In 1797, when great demands for coin to carry on war had brought about financial panic, Pitt's Government had by Order in Council prohibited the Bank of England from paying its promissory notes in cash, and Parliament had passed an Act continuing the restriction till six months after the signature of a treaty of

peace. The effect was to depreciate the paper currency (more or less, as the demand for gold varied) for more than twenty years. In 1810 a strong Committee had reported in favour of resuming cash payments, and in 1811 its able chairman, Horner, had moved resolutions to give effect to the report. But in 1811, the country being still engaged in costly war, Vansittart (then a private member) had induced the House of Commons to maintain the restriction, and even expressly to affirm a counter-resolution, that Bank of England notes 'have hitherto been and are at this time held to be equivalent to the legal coin of the realm;' and Mr. Peel, as a young member of the Government, had joined them and his father in voting for the resolution. That notes were then 'held to be equivalent to coin,' except by legislators, was not true. Early in 1810 the notes were at a discount of about  $13\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., and they continued to decline. To force this on the attention of Parliament, Lord King, who agreed with Horner, served notice on his tenants to pay their rents in gold, and thereupon Parliament completed the debasement of the currency by an Act compelling creditors to accept bank notes as legal tender for their nominal value.

And now the war was at an end, the treaty of peace was signed, the six months had elapsed, yet cash payments had not been resumed. Resumption had been postponed at first till July 1818, and then again till the end of the next session. Meanwhile, the question being much agitated in the country, and secret committees of both Houses being appointed to report on it, Mr. Peel's rising reputation as a man of business received a double tribute. The ablest pamphlet on the subject was dedicated to him, and the Secret Committee of the House of Commons, including such statesmen as Castlereagh, Canning, Huskisson, and Tierney, made him their Chairman.

The inquiry was one of the highest practical importance, but (in his own words) 'involving principles so abstruse, and details so complex and uninviting,' that brief notice of them may here suffice. His letters record the impressions made upon his mind by examining the pamphlet, by studying closely the Report drawn up in 1811 by Horner (who died in 1818), and by taking evidence from day to day. A few extracts may show with what impartial judgment and scientific method he approached the subject; but the letters teem with details, proving how little he put his trust in abstract theories unsupported by facts. His mathematical training stood him in good stead. Sir Isaac Newton (himself as Master of the Mint a 'bullionist') hardly

insisted more on verifying the law of universal gravitation in all the observed movements of the planets and their moons, than did Mr. Peel on tracing the effects of irredeemable paper money through all the fluctuations of foreign exchanges or of the price of gold.

The letters, being written hurriedly, often from the Committee Room, are mostly undated.

*Mr. Peel to Rev. C. Lloyd.*

‘I think the pamphlet admirably written, but until Saturday I had not a notion by whom it was written. I sat next Canning at the Speaker’s. He mentioned it. I said I heard it came from Oriel. He replied, “Yes, and from Copleston. Don’t you hear that he is the author?” Canning spoke of it in high terms, and is greatly pleased with the style, and Huskisson commends the argument strongly. It has made a great impression here.

‘I confess I am rather surprised that Copleston should have addressed it to me, and I consider it a great compliment. The author, judging from this work, is no friend of Opposition, for he compliments Canning and me; no exclusive friend of Canning, for, writing from the University, he praises my public conduct, and selects me for his correspondent; no friend of the Administration, for, depend upon it, his pamphlet will do them as much mischief as a pamphlet can do, by exposing the imbecility of a leading member.

‘Suppose it to be notorious, or even admitted, that Copleston is the author, should I send any civil message or write to him? In any case I should only express my acknowledgments for the personal good-will towards me, and avoid any express or implied approbation of his attack on poor Van, whom he treats very severely.’

*Mr. Peel to Rev. C. Lloyd.*

‘I have been elected Chairman of the Committee on the Currency and the operation of the Bank Restriction Act. I have therefore a fine prospect of occupation before me,

and have additional reasons to entreat your continued attention to these subjects.

‘I think we shall have little alloy of party feeling in our deliberations; all seem impressed with a conviction of the paramount importance of the question referred to us, and no one, I believe, is anxious to establish a triumph over an adversary by the maintenance or refutation of doctrines formerly advanced.

‘I conceive my chief, perhaps my only, qualification for the office for which I have been selected by the Committee, is that I have not prejudged the question, am committed to no opinion upon it, and shall be therefore at least disinterested in the result of our investigation.

‘I think the fall in the price of bullion, and the restoration of the par of exchange, at the time you mention, quite compatible with the doctrines maintained by Copleston, nay, proofs of their solidity, provided those events were simultaneous with a reduction—not necessarily of Bank of England paper—but of the general mass of paper circulation. Now, at the time you refer to had there not been an immense reduction in the paper of country banks?

‘Since I wrote to you I have read enough to convince me that there is no novelty whatever in Copleston’s pamphlet. The extent to which he has borrowed from Canning is quite astonishing. “*Ce n’est pas l’assignat qui perd,*” &c., is quoted by Canning, and it is odd enough that the only other French phrase he makes use of—his motto “*Laissez-nous faire*”—is quoted on the same occasion by Vansittart. His note explaining the effect of the co-operation of an unfavourable balance of trade with a depreciated currency on the exchange is in the Bullion Report. His theory that the depreciation of the currency has induced the enormous amount of poor rates is in an old article of the “*Edinburgh Review.*” In short, if every plume that he has borrowed were stripped from him, he would be the jackdaw of the fable. Van is much annoyed by the pamphlet, thinks it surprising that Copleston, who was a

pupil of Van's friend Dr. Beck, should attack him, and thinks the attack indecorous in the Head of a House.

'I want very much to procure admission for my youngest brother Lawrence into Christ Church about Christmas next. Have I a chance of it?'

*Mr. Peel to Rev. C. Lloyd.*

'I do not think there is a shade of difference between us on the Bullion question.

'I entered upon the consideration of it with a perfectly unprejudiced mind. I voted with Van in 1811; therefore, if I was biassed at all, it was naturally in favour of a former opinion. I am now resolved to postpone forming any decisive judgment upon many points until I have heard all the evidence. Still, with that resolution, one cannot withhold assent to what appears to be strict proof. With various other documents I have read the Bullion Report of 1810 with the utmost attention—with the same attention with which I would read the proof of a proposition in mathematics. I can find no defect in the argument, and therefore I am bound to come to the conclusion that paper was depreciated, and that the high price of bullion and the low rate of exchange were the criteria by which to judge of the extent of that depreciation.

'The real question now to be determined is clearly what you state it to be. Having departed from a system confessedly the correct one, having become habituated to one that is pernicious, at what risk can we now return to that state in which we were twenty-two years ago? "Revocare gradum, hic labor, hoc opus est." The difficulties are to my apprehension very great.

'What has been the sum raised by loan since the year 1797—raised in the depreciated currency, and upon which we covenanted to pay annuities in depreciated currency, and in that only? Having ascertained that, and the extent of the depreciation, and the rise in the value of currency which will be consequent upon the convertibility of paper into gold,

we shall then be able to determine the extent of pecuniary sacrifice which will be imposed upon the public, considering the public in the light of a debtor, and the annuitant in that of a creditor.

‘As I before observed, I believe the demonstration of the Bullion Report to be complete. Still, there are facts apparently at variance with their theory. If the demonstration is complete, this can only be so apparently. They are like the triangles that I used to bring to Bridge, and declare that the angles of those particular triangles amounted to more than two right angles. The answer in each case is the same. There is some error in the fact, and in the triangle, not in the proof, which was as applicable to that fact, and to that triangle, as to any other.

‘Many thanks for your exertions on behalf of Lawrence, in reward for which I will now release you.’

*Mr. Peel to Rev. C. Lloyd.*

‘I am on three other committees besides the secret one, all of which I ought to attend, if I could find time. I have hardly had a moment since I heard from you.

‘We have examined the Governor and Deputy Governor of the Bank, and our first question has been: “Do you conceive it practicable to resume cash payments in July next?” Answer, “No.” “Why not?” “The unfavourable state of the exchange, and the amount of the advances made by the Bank to Government, and still unpaid.” “If the advances were repaid, or a great proportion of them, what would be the proceedings of the Bank?” “We should have a greater control over the money market. We cannot reduce that part of our issues which arises from public securities. We can reduce that which is remitted on account of good bills which have only sixty-five days to run.” “If the advances were repaid, would you limit your discounts, and then reduce the circulating medium?” To this we had no very satisfactory answer. “Suppose you reduced your issues, could that affect the exchange?” “Yes.” “The

price of bullion?" "Yes," said the Governor of the Bank, and therefore appeared to me to concede the principle advocated by the Bullion Committee.'

On May 24, on consideration of the Reports of the Currency Committee, after explaining that for what he might say he was alone responsible, Mr. Peel began by frankly avowing that he went into the Committee with a very different opinion from that which he at present entertained. He now, with very little modification, concurred in the principles laid down in the resolutions against which he had voted when brought forward in 1811 by Mr. Horner, to whom he paid a high tribute of praise. After a very long and able exposition of the subject, in principle and in detail, he concluded by referring to the painful necessity he was under of opposing himself to an authority (his father's) to which he had always bowed with deference. But here he had a great public duty imposed upon him, and from that duty he would not shrink, whatever might be his private feelings. Guided in a great degree by evidence given before the Committee, he felt himself called upon to state candidly and honestly that he was a convert to the doctrines regarding currency which he had once opposed.

After two nights' debate the resolutions were carried without a dissentient voice, and other resolutions having been added in Committee, a Bill was ordered to be brought in by Mr. Peel and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Bill passed with little further discussion in Parliament at the time, but with much controversy and obloquy in later years, when it became well known as 'Peel's Act,' attaching to his name for the future the same meed of praise which he had quoted as inscribed on the tomb of Queen Elizabeth—'Moneta in justum valorem redacta.'

The letters to Mr. Gregory of most interest relate to the Catholic question. Mr. Peel expected much from the new Parliament, but his hopes were disappointed.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

'London: Feb. 15, 1819.

'I hear we are to have a greater majority this year than we had in 1817. Sir George Warrender, a papist, who knows the House well, betted me yesterday ten guineas that we had a majority of fifty on the first division. I heard the

same bet made by another. Yet I hear the Roman Catholics of Ireland are very sanguine.'

'*March 2.*—I would not, were I in your situation, sign the Anti-Catholic Petition. Your motives would be misrepresented. Your situation becomes more and more important every day. Though you and all who know you are conscious of your impartiality, it is of great importance that the impression of the world should be in concurrence with that of your friends. *Videri* is almost of as much importance in Ireland as *esse*. And recollect that, if party spirit does not abate, circumstances may arise in which it will be doubly advantageous to you not to have committed yourself by any public act.'

'*May 4.*—The result of the debate was a very unexpected one, and is very unsatisfactory. Not a doubt was entertained that it would be prolonged to a second night, and so strong was this impression that Sir William Scott and Lord Eldon's son were both absent from the division.

'The policy of our opponents was to have two nights' debate, to force up as many Protestant speakers on the first night as possible, and then to pour in the speeches of the most powerful advocates on the other side on the second night, without any intermediate replies to them. I have strong reason to think Mr. Canning had arranged the plan with Plunket &c., which, considering the chasm which divides them on general politics, and the importance of the question then under discussion, has at least the merit of novelty.

'My reason for thinking that such an arrangement was made is this. I was sitting in the Speaker's room, writing the report of the Bullion Committee, two or three days before the Catholic question came on. Mr. Canning and Mr. Plunket entered. The former said to me, "We were coming here to talk treason, and you are the last man that was to hear it." I offered to retire, but they went into another room.

'At twelve on Monday night there remained to speak in favour of the Catholics, Lamb, Canning, Castlereagh, Grant,



McIntosh, and Plunket. Leslie Foster had spoken, and without much effect. Sir William Scott had actually left the House.

‘No one showed the least disposition on our side to rise, and under the circumstances I determined to wait to the very last moment, and if no one rose, to speak myself. I was overruled in this by many staunch friends, was told I was consulting only my own feelings, not the interests of the cause, that it was perfectly certain that so many elaborate speeches as were throbbing in the bosoms of our opponents would not be allowed to vanish into thin air, and although I had risen and had been called to by the Speaker, at a moment when there was great confusion, I sat down. Lamb rose, but the House was very impatient. The Speaker put the question, Plunket got up about a second too late, and thus the debate ended. I am sorry I did not act upon my own judgment.

‘Notwithstanding the result of this debate [a Catholic majority of two], I shall pursue the course I invariably have pursued, and offer, I fear a very unavailing, but a most sincere and uncompromising resistance to a measure which will, I believe, establish Roman Catholic ascendancy in Ireland.’

On Jan. 29, 1820, the old King died, and a few days later his successor was at death's door, from violent inflammation of the lungs, subdued only by most copious bleeding. His accession to the throne as George the Fourth brought to a crisis his relations with his wife, whom he refused to acknowledge as Queen, taking proceedings against her in the House of Lords. This action of the King was vigorously condemned by popular opinion; and Canning, rather than be a party to it, resigned. The vacancy thus left in the Cabinet was offered to Mr. Peel, who promptly declined it, to the disappointment of the Protestant party.

*Mr. S. R. Lushington to Mr. Peel.*

‘Chilham Castle: Dec. 23, 1820.

‘I have heard with great dismay that there are difficulties in the way of your return to office. You may be

assured, without flattery, that greater disappointment could not be felt than will be experienced (if it should unhappily fail) by all good Protestants in the House and in the country. Therefore we implore of you that we may have our bulwark back.'

Mr. Peel's reason for declining office at this time stands thus recorded.

*Memorandum by Mr. Peel.*

'Dec. 1820.

'At an interview with Lord Liverpool he proposed to me that I should return to office, and enter the Cabinet as President of the Board of Control, the appointment which Mr. Canning had recently resigned. I declined the offer made to me.

'I told Lord Liverpool that discussions would arise in the following session on the proceedings of the Government with respect to Queen Caroline; that I could not say with truth that I approved of those proceedings. I thought the Government had acted unwisely in omitting the Queen's name from the Liturgy, and in not treating the Queen on her return to England with those exterior marks of respect which were due to her high station, and which it was both unjust and impolitic to withhold from her, when it was intended to proceed against her by a Bill of pains and penalties. I did not wish to take a hostile part against the Government, but to be enabled to express my opinions with respect to the proceedings in the case of Queen Caroline, and to take my course unfettered by any official connection with the Government.

'R. P.'

In the next session (1821) Mr. Peel, while supporting Ministers against a vote of censure, did make known with perfect freedom his own objections to the course they had taken as regards the Queen.

He took an active part also, as usual, in resisting the Roman Catholic claims. Mr. Plunket being now, owing to the death of Grattan, in charge of this question, had delivered after an

interval not, as he had intended, of two, but of four years, a brilliant and effective answer to Mr. Peel's great speech of 1817. Mr. Peel replied with courtesy and moderation, treating the question as a choice of evils, deprecating appeals to opinion out of doors, but reiterating his own firm persuasion that the concessions asked would in the event be found incompatible with the maintenance in Ireland of an established Protestant Church, and would not tend to allay religious dissension. On that ground he opposed the measure; but no man, he added, would more cordially rejoice should his predictions prove unfounded.

On a division Mr. Plunket's motion for a committee on the Catholic claims was carried by a majority of six, and he succeeded further in passing a Bill through all its stages in the House of Commons.

This measure, however, in the securities it took for the Protestant Establishment, did not satisfy the extreme Catholics, and was described by O'Connell, in his usual style, as 'more penal and persecuting than any or all of the statutes passed in the darkest and most bigoted periods of Queen Anne and of the first two Georges.' The Bill was thrown out by the Lords.

In the summer the Prime Minister in further personal interviews in vain attempted to enlist Mr. Peel as a Cabinet Minister at the Board of Control, and betrayed some soreness at his renewed refusal. This seems to have been due partly to general disinclination for office, partly to distaste for a department that would give no special opportunities for conducting business in Parliament, but chiefly to uncertain health.

### *Lord Liverpool to the King.*

'Fife House: June 10, 1821.

'Mr. Peel assured Lord Liverpool that he was strongly attached to your Majesty's present Government, and that he was chiefly actuated, in declining what it had been intimated might be proposed to him, by personal considerations, in which his health bore the principal part.

'Lord Liverpool cannot feel that Mr. Peel's consequence could have been in any degree impaired by accepting an office held for so many years by the late Lord Melville; held by Lord Castlereagh after he had been Secretary in Ireland and the chief instrument in carrying the Union through

the Irish Parliament; and held by Lord Harrowby and Mr. Canning after they had previously been Secretaries of State. As, however, Mr. Peel thought fit to decline it, Lord Liverpool proposes to offer it to Mr. Wynn.'

A few months later, however, Canning being disposed to succeed Lord Hastings as Governor-General of India, Lord Liverpool was able to make to Mr. Peel a more attractive offer, which he at once accepted.

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

*(Private and confidential.)*

'Fife House: Nov. 28, 1821.

'The time is now come when it is of importance to resume the consideration of the best means of filling up any offices in the Government which may be now vacant, and of settling what is to be the state of the King's Government previous to the next session of Parliament.

'Lord Sidmouth perseveres in his determination of retiring from his present situation, but he will, in consequence of the earnest representations of the King and of his colleagues, consent to continue to be a member of the Cabinet. Under these circumstances I am commanded by the King to offer you the seals of the Home Department.

'I should hope that this office, from the nature of the business which belongs to it, would not be unacceptable to you, and I need not, I trust, say how gratifying it would be to my feelings to be again placed in the relation to you of habitual intercourse and confidence.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

'Lulworth Castle: Nov. 28, 1821.

'It must be unnecessary to attempt to express how gratifying it is to me to receive so distinguished a proof of the King's confidence, conveyed to me through the medium which of all others would render it the most acceptable to

mé, and in a manner corresponding with that uniform kindness which I have experienced from you since my entry into public life.

‘As I have always been in the habit of writing to you without reserve, I may say to you that if it had been possible that my own wishes could have determined whether such an offer as that which you have made to me should be made or not, the habits of retirement in which I have indulged since I quitted Ireland, and the happiness of my domestic life, would have induced me to remain a private individual. And I can assure you with perfect sincerity that if in the arrangements which are about to be made my name had never been thought of, it would not in the least have abated my attachment to the Government, or my determination to give it every support.

‘As, however, the offer has been made me, and as my health is so far improved that I can on that account make no objection to public life, I will not prove myself unworthy of that signal confidence with which the King has honoured me, by either yielding to the fears of my own unworthiness, or by taking that course which, if I consulted merely my private inclinations, I might probably have preferred.

‘As I am not aware of any points upon which explanation is necessary, and as it must be important to have an early and a decisive answer, I send this by the messenger who brought your letter.’

Mr. Peel’s reference to ‘habits of retirement’ and ‘happiness of domestic life’ is explained by his marriage, which had taken place on June 8, 1820, to Julia, youngest daughter of General Sir John Floyd, Baronet, and by the birth this year (1822) of his eldest son, the present Sir Robert Peel. The attractions of his home at Lulworth Castle (where he could also enjoy his favourite amusement—shooting) had, no doubt, conspired powerfully with political motives in disinclining him to share the official responsibilities of a Ministry weak as well as unpopular, until he should be offered work worthy of his ambition.

The ‘other arrangements’ mentioned by Lord Liverpool were

for Ireland. That unhappy country, after an illusory and transient gleam of loyalty during a royal visit (the first since William III.) in 1821, had relapsed into worse than the usual disorder. The 'Annual Register' for that year describes 'a system of outrage, robbery, murder and assassination hardly to be paralleled in the annals of any civilised country,' and in agricultural districts there was great distress.

It was resolved, therefore, to try a change of Government, and, the Home Secretary being Protestant, on the principle of keeping the Catholic question open, it was arranged in place of Lord Talbot and Mr. Saurin (also Protestants) to send as Viceroy Lord Wellesley, and as Attorney-General Mr. Plunket, two chief promoters of the Catholic claims. On the other hand, Mr. Goulburn (mentioned in 1818 as the only possible Protestant Chief Secretary, but unwilling then to serve in Ireland) now consented to do so.

The supersession of Saurin was intended by Lord Castlereagh 'to be softened' to him by some other appointment, but in his first resentment he declined the Chief Justiceship with an Irish or even an English peerage, and Lord Wellesley used the opportunity to promote his junior, the able Solicitor-General, a friend of the Catholic cause.

*Lord Wellesley to Lady Blessington.*

'Bushe is one of the first men produced by our country. When I went to Ireland in 1821, I found him depressed by an old Orangeman named Saurin, then Attorney-General by title, but who had really been Lord Lieutenant for fifteen years. I removed Saurin, and appointed Bushe Chief Justice.'

In these arrangements Lord Castlereagh wished to obtain the previous consent of Goulburn and Peel. 'It is of the last importance,' he wrote to Lord Liverpool, 'that they should lend their assistance to smoothe the change, and to make it felt it must be. If they are glum or fractious, the change may become an angry party topic, and receive the odious character of sacrificing Saurin to Plunket.' It does not appear, however, that they were consulted.

All this the King approved, but he had not yet forgiven Canning for taking part with the Queen.

*The King to Lord Liverpool.*

‘(Most private and confidential.)

‘Brighton :

‘Nov. 30, 1821, 3 o’clock P.M.

‘The letter of Mr. Peel and the interview with the Marquis of Wellesley seem so entirely satisfactory as to require no comment on the part of the King. Not so, however, with reference to the communication with Mr. Canning.

‘The course which that gentleman appears to have traced out for himself from the very beginning of this negotiation leaves great doubt upon the King’s mind of the sincerity of his intentions.

‘Lord Liverpool, the King has no doubt, will see the policy of making this manœuvre operate its own defeat. The powers with which the East India Company are invested enable them to appoint a *locum tenens* for any purpose of expediency which to them may appear to be desirable. This arrangement would seem to meet Mr. Canning’s present state of mind, as he would thereby await the return of Lord Hastings to Europe, unless indeed in that interval of time he should find it convenient to conjure up some other new conundrum to suit his endless vacillation.’

In the immediate prospect of taking office, Mr. Peel resolved to appoint as Under Secretary of State a member of his own family, and made the first offer to his brother William, who had been in Parliament now four years, and had been chosen in 1819 to second the Address. Unfortunately William Peel, taking aniss some reference to his want of official experience, and conceiving an immediate answer to be required, declined the post, to the disappointment of his father, who spoke sharply to him about it. This led to explanations. Mr. Peel’s memorandum of the conversation with his brother is of interest as showing what kind of assistance he expected from an Under Secretary. The correspondence ended pleasantly, but in the mean time Mr. Peel had appointed as Under Secretary his brother-in-law and former private secretary, Mr. Dawson. His brother succeeded to the office later.

*Memorandum by Mr. Peel for Sir Robert Peel.*

‘ Jan. 1822.

‘ I spoke to William on the subject of the office after evening service on a Sunday. I told him it was vacant, and that I had not said a word to any person respecting the appointment. I said the mere official duties were light; that the parliamentary duties would be by far the heaviest, and also of the greatest importance to me. I dare say I said what I feel, that the Parliamentary Under Secretary would be like my right hand to me. I said these parliamentary duties consisted in the attendance on committees, there might be one on Criminal Law, one on Pensions, one on Education.

‘ The Secretary of State could not attend all these, and must devolve on his Under Secretary the charge of attending such as he could not, and watching the progress of the business there. If at any time the Secretary of State were unavoidably absent from the House, the Under Secretary would have to conduct such business there as belonged to the office, for it would be a mortification to him to see that business in the hands of another. I said the performance of these duties must be difficult at first, that nothing but experience could render them less so, but that experience would. I declared my readiness to do anything in my power to make them easier, adding that there was a material difference between the situation of an Under Secretary who represented the office in the House of Commons, his principal being in the House of Lords, and that of one whose principal was in the House of Commons.

‘ I understood that I made William an unequivocal offer of the situation, and if he had expressed a strong wish for further delay, I should not have opposed it. I certainly wished for an early decision, and I said it was of great importance to me on this account: some person might be suggested to me by Lord Liverpool, whose appointment would facilitate the arrangements of the Government, and



I was anxious to be able to say with truth that I had already disposed of the vacancy.'

The permanent Under Secretary of State with Lord Sidmouth had been Mr. Hobhouse, and early in December Mr. Peel had begged him to continue his services. 'I offer you in return,' he writes, 'my entire confidence.' How fully he meant this is shown by a further request in August. 'In my absence pray open all letters, private or not, addressed to me. I have no secrets.' This complete trust gives the more importance to entries in Mr. Hobhouse's unpublished diary as to the opinions at this time of Peel.

On Jan. 17, 1822, the King placed the seals of the Home Department in Mr. Peel's hands. His first act was to communicate this to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, whose opinions on the Catholic question had been so contrary to those of Mr. Peel as to present no little difficulty in the necessarily close relation in which the two statesmen would now be placed. Before commencing this correspondence Mr. Peel had taken the precaution privately to consult his friend Mr. Goulburn, now Chief Secretary for Ireland, who conveyed a hint as to the style most acceptable, and Lord Wellesley, much gratified by the letter, replied in the same complimentary strain.

*Mr. Peel to the Marquis of Wellesley.*

'Stanhope Street: Jan. 17, 1822.

'His Majesty having been pleased this day to entrust to my charge the seals of the Home Department, my first act is to communicate my appointment to your Excellency, and to express the sincere satisfaction which I derive from being placed in a relation to you which will afford me the opportunity of frequent and confidential intercourse.

'I lament that on one great question materially affecting the interests of Ireland I have the misfortune to differ from your Excellency, but I will not allow myself to believe that that difference can countervail the force of other impressions arising from the strongest attachment to Ireland, and the sincerest desire to co-operate with you in the promotion of her welfare.

'I can truly assert that it has never for a moment

abated my respect for your character as a statesman, or my admiration of that union of energy and talent which has enabled you in not less exalted stations to triumph over the most appalling difficulties.'

*Marquis of Wellesley to Mr. Peel.*

'Phoenix Park: Jan. 23, 1822.

'I had the happiness to receive your kind letter with the same sentiments which dictated that most gratifying expression of cordial esteem and good will. I meet your proposal of confidence with an unfeigned anxiety to deserve it, and to cultivate it with assiduity and zeal.

'Our difference on points of a great legislative question cannot affect our union on the practical system of the executive government of this distracted country. To whatever issue of the Catholic question we may direct our ultimate hopes, we must agree in the necessity of conducting the executive government of Ireland on principles of equity towards all his Majesty's subjects, while we cannot differ on the more painful but not less exigent duty of enforcing with a firm hand obedience to the law, and submission to the authorities of the State and to the established order of the realm.

'I think I may justly claim, from long acquaintance and the most sincere and uninterrupted respect and esteem for your character, attainments, talents, and services, the foundations of honourable friendship, on which I trust we may be enabled by reciprocal exertion to raise a system of government for Ireland which may tend to our mutual honour and to her peace and welfare.'

Among Mr. Peel's friends and admirers his appointment was hailed with lively satisfaction.

*Mr. Goulburn to Mr. Peel.*

'Dublin Castle: Jan. 21, 1822.

'Nothing has ever gratified me more than to learn that you are at length in the situation for which all your friends

have always considered you to be peculiarly designated. Only exercise your power in England as you exercised that you formerly enjoyed in Ireland, and you will obtain there the same honourable reward which you receive from everybody here, the praises of the virtuous and the good.

‘On reading over what I have written, it looks more like a sermon than a congratulation, but I will trust to your not misunderstanding me. You seem to have the talent of gratifying your correspondents, for Lord Wellesley was delighted with your letter to him, and recurred to the subject more than once, as he is apt to do when anything pleases him.’

*Lord Adare to Mr. Peel.*

‘Cheltenham: Jan. 22, 1822.

‘My dear Peel,—There is but one sentiment of rejoicing in the whole country that your great talents are again brought into activity, and I cannot withstand the pleasure of offering you my hearty congratulations. Not indeed that I consider even the high station of Secretary of State a particular distinction to you, who are assuredly destined to fill the highest office in the State. Still I cannot help expressing the deep interest I feel in all that concerns you. For I am ever,

‘Most truly and gratefully yours,

‘ADARE.’

To his old friend in Ireland, the late Protestant Attorney-General, who had been displaced to make room for the ‘Catholic’ Plunket, and who, as Lord Castlereagh foresaw, had taken his dismissal sorely to heart, Mr. Peel administered such consolation as could flow from the assurance of undiminished personal confidence and affection.

*Mr. Peel to the Right Hon. W. Saurin.*

‘(Private.)

‘Stanhope Street: Jan. 19, 1822.

‘My dearest Friend,—I cannot plead want of leisure as my excuse for not writing to you since I received your last

letter. I really can now hardly bear to write to you and address you by any other title than that to which I have always been accustomed.

‘I do hope that my warm feelings of affection towards you are so far reciprocal that it is impossible that any interruption of official relations, however occasioned, can affect your regard for me, or diminish that confidence which it has been my greatest pride to possess.

‘I hope, too, that you will correspond with me as usual, and that you will never cease to believe me,

‘My dear Friend, most affectionately yours,

‘ROBERT PEEL.’

*The Right Hon. Wm. Saurin to Mr. Peel.*

‘Jan. 24, 1822.

‘My dearest Peel,—Your most kind and affectionate letter has been a cordial to a wounded spirit. I was utterly unprepared for the event which has taken place. I had confidence in Lord Liverpool and a few others in the Cabinet that they never would consent to purchase the services of an enemy by the sacrifice of a true and steady friend. I cannot disguise from you how deeply I have been wounded, but I drop the subject, on which we shall both henceforward observe total silence.

‘I wish I had anything cheering or comfortable to communicate to you, but I have not, and it is not that I view things with a jaundiced eye.

‘Our disturbances, and the conspiracy, which is spreading, are in point of extent, inveteracy, and system far more serious than at any time since 1798. Be assured that the arm of Government should be strengthened by every possible means, and boldly applied, or tremendous consequences are greatly to be apprehended.

‘Your friends here, as you may well imagine, but ill relish the complexion of the present Irish Government, and the assumption that the past Governments in Ireland have been all wrong, and that a new system is become necessary.

I fear all this tends to constitutional experiment and constitutional change.

'Can you save us from the flame which has been kindled by the incessant and inflammatory operations which have been so long practised on the Catholic mind in this country, and which I am persuaded have mainly contributed to the present alarming state of things? Our hope is in you.

'You see that Plunket has been, in conjunction with O'Connell, framing a new constitution for the British Empire. Are our dangers and difficulties to be surmounted?

'I shall not expect any answer to these effusions, but feel fully satisfied that I still retain a place in your recollection and friendship. With the warmest wishes for your happiness,

'Truly and affectionately,

'WM. H. SAURIN.'

That Mr. Peel truly felt as he wrote to his unfortunate friend appears from another private letter, in which he also bears testimony to the high character of the new Chief Secretary.

*Mr. Peel to Sir Charles Saxton.*

'Feb. 20, 1822.

'I am delighted to hear that Goulburn is so much liked. I am quite sure he ought to be. I never yet in the course of my public life met with one who combined so many good qualities—firmness, temper, industry, knowledge of business, and the highest principles.

'Give my most affectionate regards to Saurin whenever you see him. I doubt whether he has felt his disappointment more deeply than I have. But this is between ourselves.'

Mr. Saurin's apprehensions of treasonable designs were confirmed by a letter from the Lord Lieutenant. The spirit of disaffection among Catholics, it appeared, had not been exorcised by sending them a 'Catholic' Viceroy.

*Lord Wellesley to Mr. Peel.**(Secret and confidential.)*

‘ Phoenix Park : Feb. 3, 1822.

‘ Mr. Goulburn will submit to you several documents of secret intelligence received respecting the proceedings of Committees of Association in Dublin. I have not thought it proper to render these documents matters of official record. But they require the serious attention of his Majesty’s Government, and you will judge whether it may be proper to place them before you as official reports. On my arrival in Ireland, I read the first series of these reports, as communicated to Lord Talbot, and I could not give implicit credit to the statements contained in that series.

‘ Much information has since reached me which leaves no doubt of the treasonable designs of the Committees associated in Dublin, and I cannot refuse my assent to the opinion that these committees proceed on a principle of religious zeal, and that their object is to inflame the Catholics to massacre and war against the Protestants, and to subvert the Establishment in Church and State.

‘ Mr. Goulburn will explain to you my reasons for crediting the intelligence which we have lately received. I forbear any written statement on a point of such perilous delicacy. The success of this wicked design has been considerable, and although the ostensible leaders are contemptible in talents, rank, and every other qualification for such an enterprise, we do not yet know whether more able leaders may not be behind the scene, and it is evident that materials are prepared for any leader of a more distinguished character and of greater ascendancy.

‘ I can assure you that I will continue to watch the proceedings of these Committees most closely and constantly, and as soon as I may possess the power, I hope, by timely interference, to disturb their projects.’

In reply, Mr. Peel, well used to such communications, while acknowledging their importance, took the opportunity of sug-

gesting more discrimination in reporting secret intelligence, at the same time complimenting Lord Wellesley by expressing perfect confidence in his government of Ireland.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Wellesley.*

‘ (*Secret and confidential.*)

‘ Stanhope Street : Feb. 16, 1822.

‘ Mr. Goulburn delivered to me your Excellency’s very important letter, and I subsequently received from the Irish Office the documents to which it referred. I, of course, communicated the whole to my colleagues. It is difficult to form an estimate of the probable accuracy of the information which they contain, without that particular knowledge of the characters of the informants which can be possessed only by those who have the means of local and personal inquiry. Upon a review of the whole, his Majesty’s Government thought that the general inference which your Excellency had drawn from the various statements was a rational and a just one.

‘ Should your Excellency have occasion to forward any more communications of a similar nature, allow me to suggest the expediency of designating the several informants by different letters of the alphabet, A, B, C, &c., instead of leaving a blank for the names, because it is important, in judging of the value of the information, to be able to ascertain whether that given at different periods is given by the same person, or whether the statement made by one is corroborated by the concurrent testimony of others.

‘ It must be needless for me to repeat to your Excellency the perfect assurance of his Majesty’s Government, that so far as the maintenance of tranquillity can depend upon the vigilance, discretion and energy of the Executive, it may be confidently expected under your administration.’

The chief parliamentary event of the year was Mr. Canning’s proposal that the Roman Catholic peers should be admitted to the House of Lords, to which Mr. Peel at once saw many objections.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Saurin.*

*(Confidential.)*

Whitehall: April 8, 1822.

‘ My dear Friend,—We are to have the Catholic question in a new and, I think, extraordinary and objectionable shape. Mr. Plunket a few days since when questioned seemed quite undecided as to the policy of agitating it in the course of the present session, but Mr. Canning declared his intention of proposing a Bill for the admission of Roman Catholic peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords.

‘ Unless Lord Donoughmore intends to return the compliment by proposing a Bill in the Lords for admitting Roman Catholics into the House of Commons, it does, to be sure, appear rather strange that those who so loudly complain of the anomaly of the present laws should propose to open one House of Parliament to papists, leaving them disqualified from sitting in the other.

‘ Is it prudent to tell the Catholic millions that we hear so much of—the slaves that are ground down by penal laws, “ We cannot enter upon your petitions, but we will separate the cause of your aristocracy from yours. While we cannot qualify one of you to be Mayor of a Corporation, we will admit them and their heirs to the legislative and judicial functions of peers ” ? Can this be conciliatory ?

‘ Canning in giving his notice mentioned one reason for his Bill—which I fear he will be wise enough not to repeat—that as the peers were the last to lose their privileges, so ought they to be the first to regain them. Now it is known to most persons that of all the branches of the Legislature the Crown was the last from which papists were excluded. Therefore if his argument is good for anything, it is good to readmit them to the throne.

‘ I mean to offer the most decided opposition to Canning’s proposal.’

‘ The Duke of Norfolk on this occasion approached the King in the name of the Roman Catholic peers with assurances of



loyalty and gratitude for past favours, intended to obtain some indication of the King's opinion on the question about to be submitted to Parliament.

*The Duke of Norfolk to the King.*

‘London : April 5, 1822.

‘I should indeed be wanting in gratitude to your Majesty if I were not to lay at your Majesty's feet an expression of that fervent and indelible sense of obligation which is entertained, I am confident, by all the Roman Catholic peers as deeply as by myself of your Majesty's gracious favour manifested towards us in the summons issued by your Majesty's command for our attendance at the ceremony of your Coronation, as also for those marks of particular and considerate benignity with which your Majesty condescended on that occasion to distinguish my family.

‘May we not venture, sir, to cherish a hope that so recent an adoption of the Roman Catholic peers into the most august forms of the Constitution before the eyes of all the world, may be understood as indicating in your Majesty's royal breast an undoubting reliance on our loyalty and affection towards your Majesty, and your Majesty's conviction that we may be again admitted with safety to discharge the duties of that station of the highest and most conspicuous honours of which your Majesty has so generously shown that you deemed us not unworthy?’

In reply, Lord Bathurst, who was in attendance on the King at Brighton, writes to Mr. Peel that ‘his Majesty is not much pleased with the letter, but is desirous that it should be answered civilly without noticing the application mentioned in it.’ Mr. Peel, however, saw that from the answer drafted by Lord Bathurst a false conclusion might be drawn. ‘If I state that the King was pleased to receive very graciously assurances of gratitude, loyalty, and attachment, made with the view of obtaining and as the ground of obtaining a particular favour, might it not be inferred that the King was disposed to grant that favour?’ Accordingly it was expressly added: ‘I am not authorised by his

Majesty to convey any opinion on the part of his Majesty upon the particular question which appears to have occasioned your Grace's communication.'

In the House of Commons Mr. Peel opposed the Bill, in a speech of which the Duke of Newcastle hastened to express unbounded admiration.

*The Duke of Newcastle to Mr. Peel.*

'Portman Square: April 30, 1822.

'I cannot go to bed and expect quiet rest, after having attended the debate, if I do not unburden my mind by endeavouring to express my obligation to you, in common with others who feel as I do, for your successful exertions of this night. I shall anxiously look out to-morrow morning for the result of the division.

'One ought not to covet other men's goods, but I could almost envy you the satisfaction which you must derive from your unanswerable and triumphant answer to Mr. Canning's ill-judged speech. According to my humble judgment, nothing was left wanting either of tone or argument, and I think it must secure the cause.'

Mr. Peel replied that the communication was on every account very gratifying to his feelings. The division gave a majority of five in favour of the Bill, which passed the House of Commons, but was thrown out by the Lords, a fate predicted for it by the Lord Chancellor of Ireland.

*Lord Manners to Mr. Peel.*

'June 14, 1822.

'We are very proud of your stout resistance to Mr. Canning's motion, and of the great superiority of your argument. I trust the House of Lords will deal with the measure as it deserves, and give the author of the Bill a good dressing for not suffering the country, for one year at least, to be exempt from the fever. He is a terribly restless, ambitious, and treacherous fellow, and I heartily wish him a prosperous voyage, and a permanent residence in India.'

Mr. Peel's duties as Home Secretary, of course, brought him into frequent personal relations with the King, in which he gave much satisfaction.

In March, being informed by Lord Wellesley that one Percy in Dublin had revealed a plot for poisoning his Majesty by corrupting officers of the royal kitchen, Mr. Peel apprised the King, then at Brighton. Careful inquiries having been made, it appeared that Percy was insane, and the King pronounced that 'the able manner in which the matter had been investigated called for every encomium.'

More difficult and painful questions arose in connection with the prerogative of mercy, for which ample scope was afforded by the Draconian severity in those days of the criminal law.

In several letters creditable to the heart of the King, or of those about him, he manifests great anxiety in regard to prisoners condemned.

*The King to Mr. Peel.*

'Brighton: April 13, 1822.

'The King sends the inclosed moving account to Mr. Peel, and desires that Mr. Peel will be so good as to make every possible inquiry into the case of the boy Henry Newbury, aged thirteen, and to commute his sentence from transportation, in consideration of his youth, to confinement in the House of Correction, for such a term as may be deemed expedient.

'G. R.'

In this case, on investigation, the account was found to be substantially correct, and the sentence was commuted.

*The King to Mr. Peel.*

'Carlton House:

'Tuesday evening, 7 o'clock, May 21, 1822.

'The King quite approves of Mr. Peel's humane recommendation respecting Davis; but what is to be done concerning his accomplice, Desmond, who is of the same age? Is there any opening for the other poor young man Ward? The King would be truly glad if such could be found.

‘The King wishes to express to Mr. Peel his warm approbation for his active humanity. ‘G. R.’

‘*Tuesday evening, half-past nine.*—The King has received Mr. Peel’s note, and he must say, after the deepest reflection, that the executions of to-morrow, from their unusual numbers, weigh most heavily and painfully on his mind.

‘The King was in hopes that the poor youth Desmond might have been saved.

‘The King remembers that the Chief Justice at the Council argued in favour of Ward, and that impression still remains strong on the King’s mind, that the judge’s opinion was only changed by the sentiments which on that occasion he had heard from others.

‘The King under these circumstances, and from the entire conviction that he ought to abridge the numbers for execution, does not hesitate to respite Ward.

‘The King therefore desires that Mr. Peel will select for mercy two besides Ward, so that four, for the same crime, may only suffer in the place of eight, and the King trusts in God that this extension of his royal clemency will answer every purpose of justice. The King has no hesitation in believing that Mr. Peel will readily enter into the King’s feelings upon this melancholy occasion.

‘G. R.’

In this case Mr. Peel, invoking the aid of the Cabinet, overruled the King’s commands.

*Mr. Peel to the King.*

‘May 21, 1822.

‘Mr. Peel has considered it to be his duty, in consequence of your Majesty’s commands of this evening, to send a respite until Friday morning for Ward, Anson, and Desmond, which will afford an opportunity for a full reconsideration of the case by your Majesty’s confidential servants.

‘Mr. Peel has directed the Sheriff not to encourage any hope at present that the capital sentence will be remitted.’

‘*May 22.*—It is the unanimous opinion of your Majesty’s

confidential servants who met at the Cabinet this day, that the law ought to be permitted to take its course on Friday next in the cases of Ward and Anson, and that the boy Desmond may have his sentence commuted to transportation for life.'

Two years later the King expressed much desire to spare a youth condemned to die for uttering forged notes. Mr. Peel answered that he had consulted the Lord Chancellor, and the result was a strong impression that the law ought to take its course. A few weeks before in a similar case the capital sentence had been remitted, and already that act of mercy had been used by forgers to tempt young men to pass notes on the assurance that if caught and convicted they would only be transported for a term of years. In reply, the King expressed great regret that there were no circumstances to induce the Chancellor and Mr. Peel to recommend mercy, 'a word more consoling to the King's mind than language can express.'

It appears that on this occasion, Lady Conyngham having impressed the King in favour of the culprit, 'Mr. Peel resolved, if the King persisted, to send a respite, and resign his office.'<sup>1</sup>

Two or three times during Mr. Peel's first year of office the Lord Mayor pressed him to obtain the King's consent to dine in the City, 'according to the invariable custom of his predecessors,' on the first Lord Mayor's Day on which his Majesty had been in England since his coronation. It was represented that the King had already visited the other capitals of his dominions—Dublin, Edinburgh, and Hanover. But the King uniformly refused, even when the Lord Mayor elect promised that the picture of Queen Caroline in the Guildhall should be hidden from view by scarlet hangings. On September 3, the King wrote to Mr. Peel that 'nothing will induce the King, until the temper and circumstances of the times are materially and intrinsically changed, to deviate from his determination not to dine in the City of London.'

On this point Mr. Peel tendered no advice. Whenever he did think it right to resist the royal will, he did so with deference but with firmness. The King having written desiring that the physician of the Duke of Clarence should be appointed physician to the Penitentiary, Mr. Peel represented that the responsibility for selection should be left to the Governors, and begged the King not to press him to recommend any particular person.

<sup>1</sup> MS. Diary of the Right Hon. H. Hobhouse.

In August it became Mr. Peel's duty to attend the King to Scotland. The details of the royal visit may be found in Lockhart's 'Life of Scott.' Highlanders as well as Southrons were to be conciliated to the House of Hanover. The King appeared at Holyrood in plaid and kilt of Stuart tartan, and with emulous loyalty so did Alderman Sir William Curtis. Mr. Peel walked up the High Street with Sir Walter Scott, who was received with hardly less veneration than the King.

Among the letters of this date are several from Sir Walter. In one he entreats that in the interest of Mrs. Siddons, and in order to gratify the middling classes, 'the High Personage who makes us all happy and half crazy' should attend the theatre. 'If "Rob Roy" were commanded, his Majesty would see in the man who plays Bailie Jarvie by far the most perfect personification of a character (I except nothing) that can be presented.' The following letters also were exchanged :

*Sir Walter Scott to Mr. Peel.*

'Castle Street: Aug. 28, 1822.

'While I am sensible that his Majesty's goodness has far overrated any service I may have rendered during the visit with which he has been pleased to honour Scotland, it is my pride to think that my zeal at least was evident, and his Majesty's approbation of my conduct expressed in such very gracious terms makes me one of the happiest men in these dominions, which his reign makes generally happy. To have been chosen as the person to communicate to the Highland gentlemen his Majesty's gracious approbation of their conduct adds, if possible, to the pleasure I at present feel. I will not fail to obey his Majesty's commands.'

*Mr. Peel to Sir Walter Scott.*

'Whitehall: Sept. 11, 1822.

'I hope that you are not fagged by your exertions. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to have the opportunity of improving my acquaintance with you in quieter times. A distance of five hundred miles makes me despair of seeing you at Lulworth Castle, but if you ever

come to the south-west of England, come under the impression that Lulworth never received a more welcome guest. I can promise you a castle, two abbeys, and a monastery, besides a Roman camp and tumuli without end.'

During the King's visit to Scotland, Mr. Peel found it necessary, it seems, to resist the encroachments of one who was becoming a chief potentate of the Court. 'In private, Sir William Knighton, who accompanied the King as his physician, began to act, not ostensibly but really, as his private secretary, and took upon himself with equal arrogance and ignorance to make various suggestions which would have been improper even if he had been avowed as private secretary. In these he was instantly checked by Mr. Peel.'<sup>2</sup>

The festivities in Edinburgh were saddened, but not suspended, by tidings of an event which was to initiate much political change.

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

'London: Aug. 12, 1822.

'I must beg of you to break the dreadful intelligence of which this messenger is the bearer to the King.

'Poor Londonderry [Castlereagh] is no more; he died by his own hand at nine o'clock this morning. There never was a clearer case of insanity. The King is in some degree prepared for the sad event; he knows what was the state of his mind when he saw him on Friday last. I have desired Dr. Bankhead to put down the particulars. My first idea was to come down, but I felt that public duty ought to retain me. What a sad catastrophe this is, private and public! What a conclusion to such a life! May God have mercy on his soul!'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

'Edinburgh: Aug. 14, 1822.

'I am quite overwhelmed by the afflicting news which your letter conveys to me. I had just returned from the

<sup>2</sup> MS. Diary of the Right Hon. H. Hobhouse.

King (who anchored in the Firth about two o'clock) when the messenger reached me. I, of course, immediately went back to the King, and broke to him as cautiously as possible this most melancholy intelligence. He seemed almost prepared for it, from what had passed between him and our departed friend on Friday last. He spoke of Lord Londonderry in the warmest terms of affection and admiration, and bitterly lamented his loss. The King said three or four times that you were perfectly right in remaining in London. He will land at Leith to-morrow at twelve o'clock, and make his entry into Edinburgh. He was very much affected by the horrible communication which it was my painful task to make to him, but as composed as you would have expected.'

It soon occurred to the King that the vacancy left in the Cabinet and in the leadership of the House of Commons might change Canning's intentions of going to India, which the King desired should stand. On this point he endeavoured, but in vain, to enlist the Home Secretary's support.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

*'(Most private.)*

*'Aug. 20, 1822.*

'I think it right to mention to you something which passed with the King yesterday. On going into the closet to him before the Addresses were presented, he said to me, "I will now tell you what I purposely avoided telling you until forty-eight hours after I had done it, but I have written to Lord Liverpool informing him that it is my decided intention that all the arrangements with respect to India shall remain as they were settled before Lord Londonderry's death, and that there should be no delay in completing them." The King added, "I hope you think I have done right." I replied that I was sensible of his kindness in not having previously mentioned his intention to write to you, and that I hoped he would excuse me if I declined giving any opinion upon the subject of his letter to you, or saying a word upon any point connected with it.'



*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

‘(Private.)

‘London: Aug. 20, 1822.

‘I have been most happy to hear that the King’s reception has been in every respect so satisfactory.

‘The scene you describe must have been most splendid, and I only regret that from recent circumstances there should have existed such a dreadful alloy to all your gratification. The King will probably have informed you, that in my first letter to him upon the late sad catastrophe, I requested of him not to distress his mind with the consideration of any of the arrangements which it might be necessary to make in consequence, until his feelings had recovered the first shock, and until he had gone through the various ceremonies and amusements prepared for him; and I have since assured him that nothing should be said or done by me, in his absence, which could preclude the full, free, and unfettered consideration of the measures which it might be expedient to adopt at such a crisis.

‘I have received a letter from his Majesty to-day, which makes it very desirable that I should see you, if possible, before I see him upon his return.

‘The last sad duties took place this morning. The scene in the Abbey was particularly solemn and awful. The streets were very crowded with spectators, and as we went along nothing occurred of an unpleasant nature. But at the Abbey there had assembled a mob of a very bad character, and I grieve to say that, when the coffin was taken out of the hearse, there were shouts of applause.’

‘Aug. 23.—I have received your letter, marked “most private,” and am truly sensible of the delicacy of your conduct, when the King made the communication to you respecting the Indian arrangements.

‘You will see how essential it is that you should arrive either before the King or about the same time, in order that I may have as early as possible a full explanation with you. I wish that you would likewise urge Melville to come up to town without delay.’

The sequel of the correspondence will appear in the next chapter.

The most private letters of this year show the perfect freedom of mutual confidence between Mr. Peel and his chief Oxford friend.

*Dr. Lloyd to Mr. Peel.*

‘ March 19, 1822.

‘ There are several points which I wish to mention to you, and I will just hint them now. In the first place, I may perhaps at my setting out want 500*l.* more than I possess. Can you afford to lend it me for a year? Do not put yourself to inconvenience, and I am sure that you are not too rich for your expenses.

‘ Secondly, about the studentships of Christ Church. You are the person to whom all aspirants will now apply. Now you know that the studentships, except those of the old Dean, were in your time given by interest. Since his time they have all been so given, except now and then, when on the recommendation of the Censors the Chapter as a body has presented any young man, such as Burton, Boone, or my cousin. My own determination is to give those which may fall to my share solely and exclusively to merit. I may perhaps by this determination be able to do some little good. My hope is that others may follow my example. Now if you will state to those who apply to you your conviction that I shall give my studentships in this manner, it will show them at once that you do not wish to exert your influence with me in a manner which may be detrimental to the College. If you do not approve of this, *candidus imperti*—if you do, *utere mecum*.

‘ Thirdly, about yourself. The Archbishop, the Bishop of London, and everybody else, say that you are doing admirably. The Archbishop said yesterday, “ There was but one doubt about him in the public mind, whether he would make a good quotidian speaker. Everyone is now satisfied that he can do this part of his work as well as the rest.” If you knew how much pleasure these things give me, you would not be angry with me for telling you.’

*Mr. Peel to Dr. Lloyd.*

‘ Mickleham, near Leatherhead : Sunday.

‘ Your letter only reached me yesterday, and as we had no post, I could not have the real satisfaction of sending the inclosed until to-day. To a less proud, less independent mind than yours, I should say something perhaps in transmitting it ; but I know you have no more regard for mere money than I have. I know you would not, for fifty times the sum, consider this as an obligation. I do, my dear Lloyd, consider your letter a real compliment to me, and a proof of sincere friendship.

‘ I should indeed doubt that friendship, and bitterly complain of your injustice to me, if, after the relation in which we have stood to each other—after your conduct to those who bear my name, that affectionate interest which from the hour I knew you I have taken in your concerns and witnessed on your part in my own—if, after all this, you could allow a thought on money concerns to embitter a passing moment of your life. I send what you mention, and, remember, that only, in the perfect confidence that you will act towards me as I deserve you should, and write to me if necessary to-morrow, or next week, or next month, “ Send me a hundred pounds.”

‘ I promised I would say nothing to you, but when I speak of my feelings towards you I cannot keep such a promise.’

*Dr. Lloyd to Mr. Peel.*

(Undated.)

‘ I am quite distressed. I did not want what I said at present, nor shall I perhaps want it at all, but I meant at the end of the year in making up my accounts. I had all along intended to say as much, but omitted to do so. I only wished to ask whether, in case I was hard driven at last, I might have recourse to you.

‘ Always yours,

‘ C. LL.’

*Mr. Peel to Dr. Lloyd.*

‘Whitehall: May 15, 1822.

‘I do not mark this secret, for you will not read a line before you perceive of what a confidential nature my communication is.

‘Two Irish Archbishops are dead, and I think it would be desirable to send one Englishman at least to Ireland. We might either send him as a Bishop or an Archbishop.

‘A knowledge of the world, and the art of managing men, are qualities quite as essential as learning. Kaye, I hear, would in many respects do this duty well, but I think the head of the Protestant Church in Ireland ought to be a good Protestant.

‘What should you say, and what would Oxford say, and what would he himself say, to a proposal to make Copleston Archbishop of Cashel or Dublin? We want a man with some of his qualifications at least on the Irish bench.

‘Write to me fully, without reserve and without delay.

‘Ever most affectionately yours,

‘R. P.’

*Dr. Lloyd to Mr. Peel.*

‘May 16, 1822.

‘I answer your letter in the same confidential manner in which yours is written to me, and return you your own, as I shall always do with letters of this kind, without taking a copy.

‘The Primacy of Ireland has always been esteemed a place of very high dignity in the Church, and has been filled by very considerable men; and the expectation certainly is that some man of eminence will be sent there, unless the Archbishop of Dublin were removed to Armagh, a promotion which would, I think, be satisfactory.

‘Kaye would, I conceive, make an excellent Primate. He appears to be a man of great tact and exquisite judgment, but when called upon to deliver his sentiments, does it with much firmness and decision. It is much in his favour that his early promotion was hailed with delight,

without any jealousy or envy, by the University in which he had always resided. The only drawback is his opinion on the Catholic question. Of this you are the best judge; but I think it would look strange to send him to Ireland at this moment. His sentiments, however, are not generally known.

‘On the propriety of Copleston’s promotion there will probably be different opinions. My own is that he ought to be on the Bench, and I think that nine-tenths of the University, and of the literary and clerical world in general, would be pleased with his appointment. There is nothing that I know of which can be objected to Copleston, except his temper. That is very warm.

‘His talents, his acquirements, and his reputation are such that I am sure his promotion would give general satisfaction. Whether he would go to Ireland I cannot say. His Provostship is held to be worth 3,000*l.*, and I should hardly think he would cross the Channel for anything less than the Primacy.

‘I do not think you could do better than to send Beresford to Armagh, and Copleston, or Lawrence, to Dublin. If the promotion is made in the other way, Kaye is the best man. He would not, I think, allow his particular opinions to appear.

‘In the mean time you have another Irish bishop lying dead, which may make a change in your arrangements. If you want men to make bishops, there is no man in the kingdom so fit for the Bench as Blomfield.

‘Always very truly yours,

‘C. LL.’

Among other private letters there is one of flattering appreciation from Peel’s Harrow tutor.

*Rev. Mark Drury to Mr. Peel.*

‘Harrow: May 8, 1822.

‘Give me leave to congratulate you on the birth of a son, who, I hope sincerely, will afford you as much grati-

fiction and comfort as your excellent father derived from your infancy to the present time.

‘ You are now, my dear friend, the most distinguished individual in the Empire. Canning and other lights may blaze occasionally, but the country looks up to you as a most able and efficient statesman. Even men who act in opposition to your coadjutors admire the judgment and discretion with which your talents are exerted. I pray that nothing may impede the career which you pursue, most beneficially for the State and Church.’

Also two brief notes show that Mr. Peel, on leaving Ireland, had not laid aside that plainness of language which he had sometimes found useful there, coupled with readiness to make good his words at the risk of life.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Valentine Baker.*

‘ Stanhope Street, London : Nov. 2, 1822.

‘ I have already distinctly informed you that I shall not attempt to interest the Irish Government in behalf of Mr. Burke. Your perseverance in what I consider intentional misstatements will not alter my determination.

‘ On the subject on which this correspondence commenced, I shall hold no more communication with you.

‘ Your obedient servant,

‘ ROBERT PEEL.’

*Colonel Yates to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Tring : Nov. 6, 1822.

‘ I feel very anxious about the answer to your letter. You said you should write to Colonel Brown, but if Mr. Blake should send a person over to London, you cannot avail yourself of Brown’s services. Need I say that if you think proper you may command mine to the utmost ? ’

## CHAPTER X.

1822-1824.

Lead of the House of Commons—Peel or Canning?—The King and Canning—The King and Peel—Ireland under Lord Wellesley—Pastorini's Prophecy—Education of Catholics—The Catholic Association—Bill for its Suppression—Prosecution of O'Connell—The Duke of Wellington in Paris—Lord Eldon in the House of Commons—Literature, Science, and Art—Professor Gaisford—Sir Humphry Davy—Sir Thomas Lawrence.

No sooner had Lord Londonderry's death left vacant the Foreign Office and the lead of the House of Commons, than men began to speculate on the succession. The first to pass on to Mr. Peel all he could pick up was Mr. Croker, who, on the second day after the death, 'happened to meet Huskisson.'

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'Aug. 14, 1822.

'Huskisson seemed to think that the King's determination was likely to be most influenced by you, the more particularly as you were now the only House of Commons Minister, and must have a powerful voice in deciding who was to be your assistant. And this brings me to the real motive of my writing to you, which is to say that Huskisson dropped, in the most natural and unhesitating way possible, that there could be no doubt as to your being the leader. Willing to ascertain whether this was spoken in the very confiding way it appeared, I at the end of our conversation asked the question direct, but in an idle gossiping tone, whether Canning would give you the lead, to which Huskisson answered with plain frankness that he had no doubt of it.'

This misleading assurance, whether Huskisson was to blame for it or Croker, might have caused much mischief, had Peel

been disposed, which he was not, to use his opportunity for influence with the King. Two days later the same informant, on the same authority, transmits a statement in effect directly contrary to the first.

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'*Aug. 16.*—I find that Huskisson's anticipation of Canning's opinion was not correct. Yesterday Huskisson saw him. Canning said that he had been five-and-twenty years before you in the House; that you would probably not have long to wait before he himself, who was now fifty-three, would leave you the career open; that he thought he could not with honour take an inferior station in the House, and if that were the alternative he must go to India.'

As to 'five-and-twenty years' of seniority, either Canning's arithmetic was at fault or Croker's, Canning having entered the House in 1793, Peel in 1809. Mr. Croker continues:

'*Aug. 18.*—The best informed, and those whose opinion is likely to have any weight, seem agreed that you or Canning must lead the House of Commons, and Canning's friends make no secret that he will be all or nothing. Indeed, I might give you this resolution from authority, but I should be very unwilling to undertake any mission of that nature towards you.

'In the event of your thinking that you could conduct the House without Canning, it is supposed that Lord Bathurst would have the Foreign Seals, and Palmerston the Colonial, and that our pious friend Charles Grant would be Secretary at War.

'I think I see amongst the official people a strong disinclination to Canning. They think they have him caught in the Indian net, and that he must go. I admit that it will be very hard for him to resign what he accepted so lately, yet I am thoroughly persuaded that he will do so. What he is to do then, I do not well see. He may break with us, but he cannot, in any circumstances that I can imagine, join the Opposition.



‘It is said that Lord Holland begins to talk of the propriety of making the Catholic question the touchstone of parties, and to insinuate that if you lead the Government, Canning may lead the Opposition, and may put that question on such grounds as to make it a pure stand-or-fall Government question. This I heard from one of Canning’s most powerful friends, but I laughed at it, and asked if Lords Harrowby, Melville, and Maryborough, Robinson, Palmerston, Huskisson, Wilmot, &c., were also to go into opposition, whether I, poor fellow, would also be bound by this new plan to go over to assist Joseph Hume in opposing you. I also begged to inquire how Canning and Lord John Russell were to settle their Reform question. In short, the whole supposition is ridiculous. The truth I take to be that Canning with a *squadron volante* might be extremely embarrassing; but as to a coalition between him and the Whigs, it would ruin both.’

Yet five years later Lord Holland’s idea was realised, only with the parts reversed. The Catholic question did become the touchstone of parties; Canning led the Government; Lord Harrowby, Robinson, Palmerston, Huskisson, &c., and Croker, joined Canning in coalition with the Whigs; and when Peel, for his own guidance, inquired, almost in Croker’s words, ‘how Canning and Lord John Russell were to settle their Reform question,’ he was accused of malevolently insinuating that Canning was capable of compromising his well-known distrust of democratic Reform. Meanwhile, Mr. Peel’s Under Secretary was also keeping him informed.

*Mr. Hobhouse to Mr. Peel.*

(Confidential.)

Whitehall: Aug. 20, 1822.

‘In reference to the introduction of Canning into the Cabinet, Huskisson has said, “Kings must make their opinions bend to necessity, as well as other people.” Lord Clive says he is sure if you take the lead of the House of Commons there will be a good attendance at the outset, and Government will gain strength in its progress; that if Canning does, there will be a slack attendance at

first, and the Administration will not last through the session.'

Mr. Croker's further letters are given at length in the *Croker Papers*, but with two *errata*, here corrected.

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'(Confidential.)

'Aug. 25, 1822.

'Everyone agrees that if the present Government is to go on, you or Canning must lead the House of Commons. Canning has stated that he must have that duty and<sup>1</sup> the Foreign Seals, or that he will not come in at all. The best informed think that the objection to him for any Cabinet office, and particularly for one of so much intercourse with the Master,<sup>2</sup> is insuperable.

'If Canning does not come in, can you carry on the business of the country in the House of Commons—first, without him? second, against him? Everybody says yes to the former, and almost everybody to the latter.'

Among those who were prepared strongly to support Peel against Canning was the Duke of Newcastle. But he was not more successful than the King in breaking through Peel's reserve; nor was Mr. Croker.

*The Duke of Newcastle to Mr. Peel.*

'(Private and confidential.)

'Clumber: Aug. 27, 1822.

'I merely write these few lines to catch you on your return to London, and to beseech you, on this critical occasion, to use your utmost endeavours to obtain the selection of persons who will act in unison with you, and constitute an Administration professing principles which shall be no longer doubtful. I have written so much to Lord Liverpool and to the Lord Chancellor on the same subject, that I shall now add no more, than that I should

<sup>1</sup> So in the original, not 'or' as in the *Croker Papers*.

<sup>2</sup> That is, with the King. Omitted in the *Croker Papers*.

dread nothing so much as the admission of Mr. Canning into the Cabinet.'

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Newcastle.*

'(Private.)

'Whitehall: Sept. 6, 1822.

'I am confident that on a subject of such peculiar delicacy as that on which your Grace has addressed me, and respecting which no definitive arrangements have been made, your Grace will excuse me if I forbear from making any comment.'

*Mr. Croker to the Marquis of Hertford.*

'Sept. 2, 1822.

'Peel has never opened his lips on the subject to King or Minister. Even I do not know what he will do, though I can guess what he would wish. In truth no one can any more tell what he may in the course of a negotiation be brought to do than one can foretell what will happen in a battle to be fought to-morrow.'

In truth, on this occasion, as five years later, Mr. Croker knew less of Peel's mind than he did of Canning's. There was less jealousy between the two statesmen than was imagined by the partisans of each, or by those who wavered between them. Croker might have known this from a letter addressed to him by Canning earlier in the year.

*Mr. Canning to Mr. Croker.*

'April 3, 1822.

'To Peel especially I feel it quite impossible to do justice for a frankness and straightforwardness beyond example, and for feelings for which I own I did not before give him credit, but which I hope I know how to value and to return.'

In that spirit, while Croker was writing to Lord Hertford that 'no one could tell what Peel might be brought to by negotiation,' Peel himself was communicating to the few friends for whom he reserved his confidence, his fixed intention, which

was not only, as Canning felt sure it would be, 'frank and straightforward,' but public-spirited, generous and decided—not to be changed by negotiation, or by advice. To the Speaker, to Mr. Goulburn, and to Mr. Hobhouse, he gave the same assurance.

*Mr. Peel to the Speaker (Manners Sutton).*

'London: Monday morning, Sept. 2, 1822.

'I much wished to see you last night, that I might communicate to you the course I mean to pursue on one important, probably the most important point. As I feel it to be the right course, I will not say that your dissent could have changed my intentions; but I will with truth say, that nothing could be more gratifying to me than your approbation of it.

'The question may be put to me, what I think and feel with respect to Canning's accession to the Government. I intend to answer that I should be ashamed of myself if I personally threw a difficulty in the way of it, or of his being placed in any situation which the Government might think it for the interest of the country that he should fill. I have no difference with Canning on political questions, except on the Catholic question. I had that difference with Lord Londonderry. I had it with Canning when I was Chief Secretary, and when he was a member of the Cabinet. I see no broad, intelligible, assignable cause for my objecting to act with Canning, nothing which would justify me in relinquishing my office, should I make an objection, and my objection be overruled.

'As to his being leader of the House of Commons, I must fairly own that his being so would be no personal disappointment to me; and if it were, I should think it quite unworthy of me not to submit to it. I shall, as I always have done, conduct the business of my own office, and conduct it in and out of Parliament in the way I think best; and he must be both a bold and a vain man who is dissatisfied with either the share or the importance of that business which the Home Department devolves upon him.

‘There may be objections to Canning in other quarters, the strength and the consequences of which may counter-balance all the good that would otherwise be derived from his accession to the Cabinet. On this point others are much better judges than I am. I have made no inquiries upon it. All that I can say at present is, that I personally throw no difficulty in the way of any arrangement, so far as Canning is concerned, that may be thought for the public service.

‘I do not think any advice or concurrence of opinion, however unanimous, could have reconciled me to any other decision. Your approbation of the course I mean to take will satisfy me that it is right, and your total dissent from it will not abate one particle of the affection with which I am, my dear Sutton,

‘Your most attached Friend,

‘ROBERT PEEL.

‘I have no private secretary, and therefore have no copy of this. Either burn it, or when I see you let me have it for ten minutes.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Goulburn.*

‘Sept. 2, 1822.

‘I have only made up my mind on one point, or rather I shall act upon that which was my first impression, and which every hour’s consideration has confirmed, not to throw any difficulties on personal grounds in the way of whatever arrangements may be thought best for the interests of the Government and of the public.’

*Mr. Goulburn to Mr. Peel.*

‘Sept. 16, 1822.

‘The news as to the appointment of Mr. Canning has given me particular satisfaction, inasmuch as it has confirmed my predictions as to what would be your line of conduct on the occasion, and has given me additional reason for thinking that you always do right.’

*Mr. Hobhouse to Mr. Peel.*

‘Sept. 14, 1822.

‘Holme Sumner observed that you and Canning would never go on well together. I expressed my opinion to the contrary; but as it did not appear to produce much impression on him, I told him that you had assured me you were convinced that you and Canning could cooperate with perfect harmony. He then said, “Well, if that is so, there is some room for hope.”’

Mr. Peel made known his mind, of course, also to his chief colleagues in the Cabinet, and letters from them report to him the sequel.

What passed between the King and his Ministers was recorded at the time by Mr. Hobhouse, who as Under Secretary of State possessed the confidence of Mr. Peel, and had other good sources of information.

During the interval between Lord Londonderry’s death and the King’s return, Lord Bathurst had remained with Lord Liverpool at Coombe Wood. The Duke of Wellington had often dined there, and had shown to them a letter from the Duke of Buckingham, intimating that ‘if Canning were not selected, the Duke and his friends would feel themselves at liberty to withdraw from the Government.’ There had also been communications through Arbuthnot with Huskisson, ‘Canning’s bosom friend.’

The result of these conferences soon appeared. In Scotland the King’s first impulse had been to make Mr. Peel Chancellor of the Exchequer, with the lead of the Commons. On returning to London his Majesty received from his Ministers conflicting advice. Lord Liverpool had first visited Mr. Peel, who simply expressed his perfect readiness to do whatever his colleagues might think most conducive to their general interest; he had no desire to lead the Commons, nor any wish to decline the lead if it were thought better he should undertake it. This enabled the Prime Minister to wait upon the King, and tender his advice that Lord Londonderry’s position should be filled by Canning, adding that three of his colleagues, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Bathurst, and Lord Westmorland (none of them personally favourable to Canning), were of the same opinion. ‘The King asked Lord Liverpool whether his remaining in office depended on his advice prevailing. On this question Lord Liverpool reserved himself.’

The King then sent for Lord Sidmouth, who advised giving to Mr. Peel the lead of the House of Commons, and allowing Canning to proceed to India. It was unlikely, he said, that Peel and Canning could long go on together; if they differed, or if Lord Liverpool retired, the King must choose between them, and ought in that case to prefer Peel; but it was much easier to do so now, when there was other provision for Canning, than hereafter, when India would have received another Governor-General, and nothing would be left for Canning but to go into Opposition.

Mr. Peel himself had had an audience before Lord Sidmouth, in which, disclaiming all ambitious views, he had simply intimated his acquiescence in whatever might be deemed best.

Lastly, the Lord Chancellor (Eldon), who had been much aggrieved by some disrespectful observations made by Canning on his opposition to the Catholic Peers Bill, 'told the King that if he let Canning into the Cabinet, Canning would get rid of all his Majesty's old servants.' Between these contrary opinions the King was somewhat slow in making his choice. The Duke of Wellington, who had the last audience on Saturday, September 7, probably decided his wavering judgment, for on Sunday he wrote to Lord Liverpool authorising him to offer the Foreign Office to Canning.<sup>3</sup>

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

'(Private.)

'Coombe Wood: Sept. 8, 1822.

'I have this evening received a letter from the King, by which his Majesty consents to the admission of Mr. Canning into his service. I will show you the letter when I see you to-morrow morning. It is written to be communicated to Mr. Canning, and is expressed with as much delicacy as, considering the King's strong personal feelings, could reasonably be expected.

'I am most anxious to give you the earliest information of the King's decision, as I think it due to you on every account, and not the less so for your handsome and disinterested conduct throughout the whole business. I shall write to Canning to-night.'

<sup>3</sup> MS. Diary of the Right Hon. H. Hobhouse.

One sentence in the King's letter was not remarkable for delicacy: 'The King is aware that the brightest ornament of his crown is the power of extending grace and favour to a subject who may have incurred his displeasure.' Canning's proud spirit was with difficulty induced to 'acknowledge with all thankfulness and humility the King's spontaneous signification of his Majesty's grace and favour.'

*Lord Bathurst to Mr. Peel.*

'(Secret and confidential.)

'Downing Street: Sept. 17, 1822.

'As I hear you are curious about the termination of the business, I write a line to tell you that Canning had at first intended to write a letter on the subject of the paper which was transmitted to him; but, chiefly by the Duke of Wellington's advice, he forbore doing so. The Duke told him that, as he intended to accept, he had better take no further notice of the paper, unless it was referred to by the King.'

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

'Fife House: Sept. 20, 1822.

'The audience of Canning on Monday went off as well as, considering the previous awkwardness, we had any right to expect.'

The Government was further strengthened by the appointment of Robinson in place of Vansittart as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Huskisson as President of the Board of Trade.

Relying on Mr. Peel's fidelity and zeal, the King now often had recourse to his advice. On February 9, 1823, his Majesty, being at Brighton out of health, was shocked by reading in the 'Sunday Times' a statement, alleged to be on authority, that the King's disorder, it was feared, was 'of a hereditary description. His Majesty,' the writer went on to say, 'has had too many misfortunes preying upon his benevolent mind—the loss of a daughter and a consort equally dear to him, and of a Royal brother whose political principles he loved, besides the excruciating sufferings of his agricultural subjects, so sincerely deplored in his late most gracious speech. These and other weighty concerns have oppressed his paternal feelings, and borne hard on his superior intellect.'



But if Divine Providence has ordained that mental afflictions shall be no less transmissible than the virtues of the heart, and the best of Princes should furnish another example of the lamentable fact, still one resource will remain—the prayers of a dutiful, loving, and loyal people.’

This cruel insult (perfectly intelligible to the readers for whom it was intended) was naturally regarded by the King as proving the necessity for placing some restraint upon the licence of the press.

*The King to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Pavilion, Brighton : Feb. 11, 1823.

‘The King has determined to communicate with Mr. Peel upon the subject of a paragraph in the inclosed newspaper. It is frightful to believe that any set of wretches could bring themselves to put forth to the public, for the sake of gain, a settled course of insinuation to make the people believe that the greatest of all afflictions that man can be heir to has fallen upon their King. Can you believe, sir, that I can read such printed statements without feeling most severely; more especially when I look back to the gloomy chamber of that revered parent whose life was ended under the influence of this greatest of all earthly calamities ?

‘The King desires, if the law can possibly reach this infamous attack, that the Attorney-General should lose no time in attending to it.

‘The King is obliged to observe that some steps should be taken with respect to Sunday papers. Why not treble the duty upon all Sunday newspapers? The King reads everything of this kind, and feels it a duty to do so; hence the King can judge of the mischief resulting from this abused liberty of the press.

‘These observations are equally applicable to obscene prints in the form of caricatures. There is scarcely a shop in London that deals in such trash in which the King is not exposed in some indecent, ridiculous manner. This is now become a constant practice, and it is high time that it should be put a stop to. The King relies with great

confidence on Mr. Peel's zeal and ability, and above all on that most distinguishing quality, honest firmness.

'G. R.'

*Mr. Peel to the King.*

'Whitehall: Feb. 12, 1823.

'Mr. Peel received last night the letter which your Majesty addressed to him, and the infamous and disgusting publication which accompanied it. Mr. Peel did not lose one moment in seeking an interview with the Attorney-General, and in calling his immediate attention to the subject of proceedings at law against the parties, for whose baseness no adequate terms of reproach can be found. Mr. Peel had a second interview this morning with the Attorney-General, who will confer without loss of time with the Solicitor-General. Mr. Peel will for the present content himself with assuring your Majesty that all the subjects on which you have done him the honour to write to him shall undergo the fullest consideration.'

Mr. Peel brought the subject also before the Cabinet, but the law officers, with prudent regard to the possible inclinations of a London jury on some of the topics referred to, advised against a prosecution. This opinion was communicated by Mr. Peel in person to the King, who acquiesced. His next complaint was against members of Parliament.

*The King to Mr. Peel.*

'(Private.)

'Pavilion, Brighton: March 17, 1823.

'The King desires to express to Mr. Peel his entire satisfaction at his judicious conduct and management relative to the King's Property Bill. Sir William Knighton faithfully detailed to the King Mr. Peel's sensible observations on this matter. But it is not surprising that the King should feel indignation at the attempt made to misrepresent everything that relates to himself, whenever the opportunity occurs, by a certain set in the House of Commons. The King is highly pleased to learn that the great body of the

House manifest a pacific disposition ; to do otherwise would be madness.'

Soon afterwards the King, who was rearranging Windsor Castle, was so incensed by an interference of the Board of Works that he wrote angrily to the Prime Minister, insisting on the dismissal of the head of that office. Lord Liverpool, bending before the storm, wrote to the King that his orders should be obeyed, but at the same time invoked Mr. Peel's aid to obtain some better settlement of the question.

*The King to Lord Liverpool.*

'Windsor Castle : Oct. 17, 1823.

'The inclosed note has just been laid before the King by the Deputy Comptroller of H.M. Household, and a more impudent production it is impossible to conceive. As if any order of the description mentioned could be given by any one but by the King's own special commands ! The King has had so many difficulties with this Colonel Stephenson of a similar description that it is impossible to go on, and the King therefore desires that Lord Liverpool will immediately place the Board of Works on a different footing, and that Colonel Stephenson be removed. The King will admit of no apology on the present occasion.'

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

'(Most private and confidential.)

'Walmer Castle : Oct. 18, 1823.

'I am afraid I must impose upon you a very painful and disagreeable duty ; but as a matter of delicacy to Colonel Stephenson, for whom I have a very warm regard, I shall be much obliged to you if you would see him, and deliver to him yourself the inclosed letter, which I have left open for your perusal.

'I shall most deeply regret the loss of his services in the office of which he is the head. I should hope, however, that he may be persuaded to make an explanation and apology which may induce the King to relent.

‘I send you a copy of the letter which I have written to his Majesty. I know that at this time his temper of mind towards myself is such that it would never have done to put off executing his commands.’

This delicate business Mr. Peel conducted with such tact, promptitude, and prudence (obtaining from the offender a letter of explanation to the Prime Minister, which Peel himself cut down and otherwise edited for presentation to the King), that within a week the King was pacified, Colonel Stephenson was continued in office, and Lord Liverpool wrote: ‘The satisfactory termination of this affair has been in a great degree the consequence of your good management, and I am most truly thankful to you for it both on public and private grounds.’

In Ireland this year, although the government had been placed in the hands of an able Viceroy, friendly to the Catholic claims, much anxiety existed on account of the prevalence of secret societies, bent on mischief. Considerable alarm was caused also by a paper which the Roman Catholics were disseminating widely as a prediction that Protestantism was about to be destroyed.

*Mr. Gregory to Mr. Peel.*

‘(Confidential.)

‘Dublin Castle: March 31, 1823.

‘I send you some extracts from “Pastorini’s Prophecy,” which have been circulated with industry through the country. Is it surprising that the Protestants are alarmed when the papists are so confident? and will any rational man believe, with such encouragement and such hopes of an early completion held out by these sanguinary prophecies, that the Ribbonman’s oath to wade knee-deep in Protestant blood, until heresy shall be extinguished, is the oath only of a few shoeblacks, tailors, and coal-porters? Could the speaker who said so have believed his own assertion? But of him I will not speak. You are embarked together in the same vessel; she is excellent, but you have too many rats on board.’

In reply, Mr. Peel dwells on the importance of avoiding any just cause of offence to Roman Catholics.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

*(Confidential.)*

Whitehall: April 5, 1823.

'I entirely agree with you that it is not surprising that the Protestants are alarmed. On this very account I am most anxious that the Protestants should be clearly in the right. Suppose their alarms to be justified in their fullest extent, they will find more real strength in having the public opinion of England on their side, than in all the Orange lodges that ever were or ever will be formed.

'I read with great pain the other day the account of the trial of a Mr. Smith, at the Armagh Assizes. He was properly acquitted, but the trial proved an unprovoked murder by an Orange procession, and no reparation for it. These things do us serious mischief, and I bitterly lament them on every account.

'I want no sacrifice of principle, no hollow heartless conciliation, but I want the Protestants to be in the right. Let them bear in mind always that they are the party favoured by the law and the Constitution, that it is their peculiar duty to avoid every just cause of offence or irritation, their peculiar interest to discourage secret engagements and affiliated clubs, and we shall be better enabled to maintain to them the privileges they enjoy.

'I make allowance for the provocations offered to them. No man can feel more strongly than I do the absurdity of attempting to compel harmony and good-will by law. But depend upon it, in this age of liberal doctrine, when prescription is no longer even a presumption in favour of what is established, it will be a work of desperate difficulty to contend against "emancipation," as they call it, unless we can fight with the advantage on our side of great discretion, forbearance, and moderation on the part of the Irish Protestants.

'Their real strength in the hour of danger will be a conviction on the part of England that their cause is a just one, and that the hostility which threatens them is the result of sheer religious bigotry and hatred, and not the offspring of insulted and irritated feelings.'

Pastorini's Prophecy, to a modern reader not responsible for Ireland, would not seem formidable. It is one of the numerous endeavours, Catholic and Protestant, to apply to the past and future history of the Church the Revelation of St. John. '*The key of the bottomless pit.* To St. Peter are given the keys of heaven, to Luther the key of hell. Alas, what disparity between the functions of the Apostle and the Reformer! . . . *There came out locusts*—that is, a number of Reformers. . . . *They should torment them five months*—that is, 150 years from the Reformation, 1525-1675. *Their power was to hurt men for five months*—here began a new period of 150 years, 1675-1825, therefore of the reign of the locusts,' that was the alarming announcement, 'only two years remain.' Why were Irish Catholics so diligently spreading this light of prophecy? Was it in the amiable spirit of the Italian author, who concludes: 'One cannot but wish that the people represented by these insects would enter into a serious consideration of that circumstance, lay down all animosity against their ancient Mother, and be received into her bosom'? Or were designing men using his prediction for evil purposes of their own?

The government of Ireland by Mr. Peel as Home Secretary, Lord Wellesley as Lord Lieutenant, and Mr. Goulburn as Chief Secretary, went on this year with perfect harmony. But on April 17, in the House of Commons, the Grenville party being attacked for having joined the Cabinet of Lord Liverpool without having made any sufficient stipulations in favour of the Catholics, Mr. Wynn, in defending his colleagues and himself, maintained that one pledge at least had been given, that there should be in Ireland a just, impartial, and conciliatory administration, and that pledge had been redeemed. The censure herein implied on previous Governments, for which Mr. Peel had been responsible for six years, he could not pass over, and he challenged anyone who knew the facts to produce a single instance in which, while he held office, an impartial application of the existing laws had been denied. Next day he wrote in the same sense a temperate remonstrance to his colleague.

*Mr. Peel to the Right Hon. C. W. W. Wynn.*

'(Private.)

'April 18, 1823.

'I am perfectly satisfied that whilst I was connected with Ireland, justice was administered with strict, and I might

say, a scrupulous impartiality, because where one fears the influence or the imputation of a bias from political feelings, one is apt to be particularly cautious. Mr. Bushe was Solicitor-General, Mr. Fitzgerald was Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I cannot call to mind a single instance of any difference of opinion growing out of our respective sentiments on the Catholic question, or one case in which, in the disposal of patronage, a man was set aside because he was a Roman Catholic.

‘It is impossible to estimate the effect which may be produced on the minds of the Roman Catholics by entrusting the administration of the laws to those who espouse their cause in Parliament; that is in a considerable degree a question of feeling. But I did not find any difference in the principles on which Lord Wellesley proposed to conduct the government of Ireland, from those to which I had adhered when I was connected with it. I was perfectly ready, therefore, to co-operate with him, and of course I cannot acquiesce in any opinion, express or implied, that the existing laws were not administered with perfect fairness and impartiality before Lord Wellesley’s assumption of the government.’

On the same occasion Mr. Brougham had charged Mr. Canning with having, by joining the Liverpool Cabinet, tied his own hands on the Catholic question, ‘exhibiting the most incredible specimen of monstrous truckling for the purpose of obtaining office that the whole history of political tergiversation could furnish.’ This was cut short by Canning, who exclaimed, ‘I rise to say that that is false,’ and refused to withdraw the expression. So much warmth ensued that a motion was made to commit both Brougham and Canning to the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms. In the end, Mr. Peel, bearing testimony from his own knowledge that nothing could possibly be more free than Canning’s conduct from the imputation of truckling, obtained a withdrawal of the motion, and the consent of both parties to let the matter drop.

Always Ireland. In 1824 the letters of most interest are still connected with that country. Mr. Peel from the day when he became Irish Secretary had been the one statesman most zealous in promoting Irish education. As Home Secretary, he now sets

forth his own decided preference for at least some united religious education, free from all intention to proselytise, but based upon the Bible.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. J. Leslie Foster.*

*(Private and confidential.)*

Whitehall: Nov. 2, 1824.

‘Your letter on the proceedings of the Commissioners of Education has been very interesting to me. Good must be the result of that Commission. If the clergy of our Church have been negligent in promoting education, let their negligence be exposed, for without exposure it will probably never be corrected. There is not a more strenuous advocate than I am for the rigid exaction from the Protestant clergy of every duty which legal or moral obligations impose upon them. We may, perhaps, protect from spoliation well-paid industry, but well-paid idleness and indifference will not long withstand the combined attack of the foes of the Established Church in Ireland.

‘Supposing the principle of instruction to be adopted which you think it probable will be recommended by the Commissioners, it appears to me everything we can wish for. Such a principle can hardly, or at least cannot with any decency, be rejected by those who avow themselves friendly to the education of the Roman Catholic children. But let it be rejected by the priests, I shall still not despair of the ultimate success of a proposal so rational and fair.

‘I sincerely hope that the Commissioners will not be induced by any consideration to give up the use of the Scriptures on the five days. Let the selection be made from the Douay or any other version; let every passage which touches upon the mysteries of religion be excluded, but insist that all the children shall take at least one daily draught from the common fountain of their religious creeds.’

A few days later Canning, returning sundry letters on the general state of Ireland, gives his opinion on a new danger which had arisen there.



*Mr. Canning to Mr. Peel.*

‘Gloucester Lodge : Nov. 6, 1824.

‘I am much obliged to you for the perusal of Goulburn’s letters. The satisfactory part of their contents is somewhat overbalanced by that which is of a different character. The Roman Catholic Association is the most difficult problem that a Government ever had to deal with.’

‘The Catholic Association of Ireland’ (to call it by its own name) had been founded in 1823 by O’Connell and Sheil. Under the Convention Act of 1793 representation of the people, or of any part of them, for political purposes otherwise than through Parliament was illegal. In order to keep within this law, the new society was not representative, nor exclusively Catholic, nor secret, being open to all subscribers, and to reporters. Beginning as a small debating club, it had grown rapidly to the dimensions of a Catholic Parliament, including peers and landowners, priests and people, all in fact who felt themselves to be otherwise unrepresented. In order to popularise the Association, O’Connell had devised the ‘Catholic rent,’ to be collected in each parish from every Catholic man, woman, or child who would subscribe. The chief objects for expenditure were to be : an agency for petitioning Parliament ; the protection of Catholics in the law courts against acts of violence committed by Orangemen ; subsidies to the English press in the interest of the Catholic cause ; and the support of Maynooth College and free Catholic schools. It thus became an *imperium in imperio*, with effective organisation, with voluntary taxation throughout Ireland, and having at its back the national aspirations of the people. Nothing could be more opposed to the well-known principles of Canning. Friendly as he was to the Catholic claims, he could not approve of urging them by means directly opposed to his favourite doctrine that the wants of the people should be made known to their rulers through their representatives in Parliament, or at public meetings convened by the constituted authorities of each district.

Mr. Peel no doubt in great measure shared these views of Canning, but, as in official duty bound, he made at once a searching and comprehensive investigation of the several courses open to him. The long letter in which he discusses them with his friend

the Chief Secretary for Ireland may be none the less interesting for having been written in haste and showing his mind in undress.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Goulburn.*

*(Private and confidential.)*

Whitehall: Nov. 6, 1824.

‘Let us look at the different alternatives which are afforded for our choice. We may do nothing, and let the Association take its course.

‘The advantage of forbearance and passiveness is that we do not run that risk of actual failure and defeat which might attend the vigorous attempt to suppress the body, or to punish the members, that we take our chance of disunion among them, or of their bringing discredit upon themselves by the folly of their proceedings. This has happened before, and may happen again. We take our chance also of some flagrant violation of the law, which will place us on vantage ground.

‘The evils of forbearance and delay are, however, very great. The body is gradually acquiring firmness and consistency. As you observe, the approaching dissolution of Parliament brings new adherents, new declarations in favour of the Association, which do not lose their weight because they are probably insincere.

‘If the Government connives, the public mind will take its tone from that which appears to be the feeling of the Executive. Individuals will be dismayed and disheartened. The bold will attack us for our want of energy, and the timid will commit themselves to the Association. In the mean while the system of correspondence and combination will be gradually improving, and a change of name will be almost sufficient to develop, on the proper occasion, a formidable and traitorous confederacy.

‘I am writing to you *currente calamo*, and, as I said before, unprepared now to give a decisive opinion on the course to be pursued. But I cannot write without sufficiently showing that I see the possibility of tremendous consequences from further forbearance and inaction.

‘And now for our remaining alternatives. We may abuse the Association in Parliament, and do nothing. In fact we shall by that course be doing worse than nothing. The Association would beat us at a scolding match.

‘We may enforce the existing law if the Association has violated it. You must well consider in Ireland whether there has been a violation of the law, and such a violation as it would be wise to prosecute. I mean with a view of striking a blow at the existence of the Association.

‘We may go to Parliament and ask for a new law.

‘We may do this in either of two ways. We may propose some enactment framed against societies in general, without appearing to be specially directed against the Association, yet so framed as to comprehend it. Or we may boldly state the full extent of the danger, admit that we know the difficulties in detail of legislating, admit that we foresee the possibility of easily evading ordinary laws, but say distinctly that we cannot tamely sit by while the danger is hourly increasing, while a power co-ordinate with that of the Government is rising by its side, nay, daily counteracting its views, and we may ask for some enactment specially directed against the Association sitting in Dublin and its ramifications, and, if a precise enactment cannot be framed, giving a wide discretion to the Executive.

‘While I propose these alternatives for discussion, I am not so blind as not to see the difficulties of each.

‘I see how easy it will be to evade, and thus almost to throw ridicule upon general enactments, how easily the name of the Association can be changed, and such slight accommodations to the letter of a new law be effected as will protect from prosecution and yet leave the real evil undiminished.

‘I see what an outcry will be raised against a special law, or against discretionary power—nay, if you are to remove this difficulty and tell me to frame the special law, I am sure I am not now prepared to suggest its provisions.

‘The chief good I should anticipate from an appeal to the Legislature would be the opportunity it would afford of

a full exposition of the danger, and the proof it would give that the Government are aware of it, and reprobate the proceedings of the body from which it springs.

‘I cannot help thinking that there would be a strong and pretty general feeling that the nuisance must be somehow or other abated, that its continuance was inconsistent with the dignity and fettered the action of the general Government. If the discussion did nothing but bring matters to an issue—if it merely advanced the development of the drama by one act, it would be something.

‘But I must draw my letter to a close; perhaps I had better not have written at all, than have written so hastily on a subject of such vital importance. I did not intend it when I began.’

The Duke of Wellington had taken a grave view of the mischief to be apprehended.

*The Duke of Wellington to Mr. Peel.*

‘Apethorpe: Nov. 3, 1824.

‘If we cannot get rid of the Catholic Association, we must look to civil war in Ireland sooner or later. Although all concerns of that description are matters of risk and doubt, I should think there could be none of the military result. But should we be better situated afterwards? I think not. We should find the same enemies blasting the prosperity of the country, and ready to take advantage of the weakness of this country at any moment to do us all the harm in their power.’

How seriously the Duke contemplated the possibility of civil war is shown by a paper which seems to have accompanied his letter.

*Memorandum by the Duke of Wellington.*

‘Whether this information is true or not, it is quite clear that the organisation of the disaffected in Ireland is more perfect than ever, much more so than in 1798.

‘ If they can raise money, they will have good arms and ammunition, and then the contest may for a moment be serious. Should we not look a little to the resources of Government in the event of any rising in Ireland? What is the state of the yeomanry in Ireland? What of the militia in Ireland? What of the militia in Great Britain? What length of time would elapse before each of these corps could be called out, and rendered available for service in Ireland?’

While Mr. Peel was doubting how to treat the Association, he received upon the general Catholic question a stiff ‘ Non possumus ’ from the King.

*The King to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Nov. 19, 1824.

‘ The King has for some time observed with considerable attention the conduct of the promoters and abettors of what is termed “ Catholic Emancipation.” The proceedings of the collective bodies of that persuasion in Ireland seem to be little short of what may fairly be termed intended rebellion. Moreover, the King is apprehensive that a notion is gone abroad that the King himself is not unfavourable to the Catholic claims.

‘ It is high time for the King to protect himself against such an impression, and he has no hesitation in declaring that if the present proceedings continue, he will no longer consent to Catholic Emancipation being left as an open question in his Cabinet. This indulgence was originally granted on the ground of political expediency, but that expediency dissolves when threatened rebellion calls upon the King for that which the King never will grant.

‘ The sentiments of the King upon Catholic Emancipation are those of his revered and excellent father; from those sentiments the King never can and never will deviate.’

This letter Mr. Peel, by the King’s command, communicated first to the Duke of Wellington, and the following letters passed between them.

*The Duke of Wellington to Mr. Peel.*

‘(Confidential.)

‘London: Nov. 20, 1824.

‘I think upon the whole that you had better not show the King’s letter to anybody. It would really create an alarm which it is not intended to create, and can do no good. At all events, do not be in a hurry to communicate this letter to anybody. Consider of the subject till we shall meet in ten days hence.’

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

‘(Confidential.)

‘Whitehall: Nov. 23, 1824.

‘Two persons have this day mentioned to me in conversation the letter. This circumstance I must own makes a material alteration in my opinion as to the propriety of withholding it from Lord Liverpool, who will be at the Council to-morrow.’

*The Duke of Wellington to Mr. Peel.*

‘Woodford: Nov. 23, 1824.

‘Upon reflection I am convinced that what you suggested and I at first concurred in would be the proper thing to do with the letter; that is, to show it to Lord Liverpool. When shown to him it becomes of no importance; as long as it is concealed from him it is of importance, and the concealment gives it the air of an intrigue.

‘As far as I recollect, the King desires you to show it to the Chancellor and to me, and permits you to show it to any others to whom you may think proper to show it. But whether he does so or not, such a letter ought not to be kept from his Prime Minister.

‘In communicating the letter to Lord Liverpool, I recommend you to tell him what you said to the King respecting it; and I shall be very much obliged to you if you will tell him what passed upon the subject between the King and me.

‘The King told me that he had given or sent such a

letter, after it had reached you, but before I had seen it. I told him that it appeared to me that there never was a moment in which the Catholic question as a parliamentary question was so little to be apprehended as at present, and that it would be most unfortunate if he were at this moment to involve himself and his authority in it, that his intention not to allow this question any longer to be considered open went to destroy the principle on which the Government was founded, and that I really believed that many of those most opposed to the Catholics considered a Government thus formed better able to defeat the Catholics than if formed exclusively of persons opposed to what was called the Catholic question.

‘I do not think the King intends what his letter states. At all events his intention is founded upon an hypothesis, and I am certain that we shall find him very little disposed to carry such an intention into execution.’

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

‘Whitehall: Nov. 24, 1824.

‘I saw Lord Liverpool to-day before he saw the King, showed him the letter, and told him your remarks and mine to the King upon it. Everything was quite satisfactory. His opinion was that I ought not to communicate the letter further, or take further notice of it.

‘I received this morning a letter from the King, directing me to show the letter to Lord Liverpool, and adding that he meant to see Lord Liverpool upon it. I begged that he would allow me an audience previously.

‘I spoke very fully to the King, and earnestly begged him to make no declarations, and to let all matters remain exactly upon their present footing. He saw Lord Liverpool afterwards, was in good humour, and said nothing which gave Lord Liverpool the slightest uneasiness or cause for complaint.’

A few weeks later, in answer to inquiries from Mr. Peel as to the state of Ireland, the Chief Secretary wrote :

*Mr. Goulburn to Mr. Peel.*

‘Dublin Castle: Dec. 14, 1824.

‘A large and respectable portion of the community entertain most serious apprehensions, and it is impossible to deny that there is much to excite the fears even of the most courageous. Those, however, who look to immediate and combined insurrection appear to me to mistake the nature of the danger. I cannot as yet trace the existence of any such project. I do not believe that it exists. The people have no military organisation, no adequate supply of arms, no pecuniary resources, no regular leaders. The immediate danger that I contemplate is a sudden ebullition of fanatical fury in particular places, originating not in any settled or premeditated plan, but in some casual circumstance operating upon the mind of a people easily excited at all times and now in a state of unusual and extreme excitation.

‘An indiscreet or wicked priest (and that there are many of both classes I have daily experience) might tomorrow send forth his congregation to destroy the lives and property of their Protestant neighbours. No military force could occupy the country so thoroughly as to give to every part protection against this danger.

‘I do not see that our means of averting it would be materially improved by calling out the yeomanry. Districts would still remain devoid of this protection, and the feeling of approaching war, which certainly forms a topic of conversation among the lower orders, would be strengthened. The gentry would, generally speaking, enroll only Protestants (and I should not blame them for their preference of this class), but that very circumstance would draw still more clearly the line of separation between the two classes, and by so doing would increase their mutual feeling of hostility, and perhaps occasion contests which might otherwise be avoided.

‘Observe, however, that my argument against employing the yeomanry is only with reference to the present state



of things. If the period should arrive when we must really contemplate approaching insurrection or actual war, the reasons which I have urged would vanish. The Protestant must then be arrayed against the Roman Catholic as the only security for his life or his possessions, and for the security of the State. In any case in which rebellion may be anticipated as near at hand (which God forbid), I certainly view the yeomanry as a source of considerable strength. Their discipline is defective, but it is greatly superior to that of any body which could be directed against them. I do not think you can regard the embodying of the Irish militia as a resource. It would be as easy to raise 30,000 regular troops as to bring the whole of the militia into the field.

‘ You are quite right in supposing that the police force is capable of augmentation. Under your Peace Preservation Act it may be increased at once in the event of actual or apprehended disturbance.’

From the same letter it would seem that Mr. Goulburn had hitherto been less careful than Mr. Peel to restrain Government newspapers from irritating Catholic opinion.

‘ The conduct of the “ Patriot ” is a point on which I must take shame to myself. I was really but little aware of its style and its politics. I will keep a watch over it to prevent its being mischievous. It must publish the debates of the Association, otherwise it would lose the little sale it has, but its comments shall in future be in a very different style.’

Mr. Peel at this time, as always, absolutely refused to divide with a Committee of the House of Commons the responsibility which in his view belonged to the Executive Government.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Goulburn.*

‘ (Private and confidential.)

‘ Whitehall : Dec. 15, 1824.

‘ I have just returned from a long Cabinet on the state of Ireland. I mean to write to Lord Wellesley to-morrow

or the next day. I never can consent to throw loose to the Irish Committee (which is, by the bye, I perceive, called by Mr. O'Connell, "Rice's Humbug Committee"), or to any Committee, the steps to be taken against the Roman Catholic Association.

'I believe a new law to be necessary. I believe that law must be a very strong one; but if we, the King's servants, shrink from the responsibility of directly proposing it, and fighting stoutly every stage of it, until it is either rejected or passed into a law, we are unfit for our stations, and unfit above all for the necessities of the present times.

'I shall distinctly convey to Lord Wellesley my opinions upon that point. This is, of course, for yourself.'

Meanwhile Lord Wellesley, accustomed in India to independent action, had entered into legal conflict with the Irish leader.

Mr. Goulburn wrote to communicate the intention of the Irish Government to prosecute Mr. O'Connell for seditious language, in expressing a hope that, should Parliament not grant the Roman Catholic claims, 'another Bolivar<sup>4</sup> might arise to vindicate the rights of the Irish people.' This Mr. Plunket and his colleague pronounced to be a direct exhortation to insurrection, and an attempt to intimidate Parliament. Mr. Goulburn himself 'did not think that a second opinion could exist as to its seditious nature and dangerous tendency,' and Lord Wellesley had not deemed it necessary to consult the Home Secretary. His only doubt had been whether to proceed also against the Association, for having heard such language without expressing disapproval. The letter reports also increased agitation.

*Mr. Goulburn to Mr. Peel.*

'Dublin Castle: Dec. 20, 1824.

'The country continues in much the same state. The alarm is universal. Persons from all parts of the country

<sup>4</sup> Bolivar was at the head of an armed force asserting the independence of the Spanish South American

colonies against Spain, and O'Connell had sent his son 'to wield a sword in the cause'!

express their apprehension of immediate massacre and insurrection, though every inquiry leads to the result that there is no preparation made for such a project. Nothing can be more painful than the task imposed upon the Government of endeavouring to calm apprehensions undoubtedly much exaggerated, but which I am not surprised that individuals residing in the midst of a highly excited Roman Catholic population should entertain.'

Misfortunes seldom come singly, even in Ireland. Two days later the Chief Secretary reports another trouble, and another prosecution commenced by Mr. Plunket, again without asking the Home Secretary's sanction.

*Mr. Goulburn to Mr. Peel.*

'Dublin Castle: Dec. 22, 1824.

'I informed you on Monday that we had proceeded to arrest O'Connell, for words the purport of which was to excite the people to arms in defence of their rights if not conceded by Parliament. No sooner was the measure taken than Sir Harcourt Lees publishes in the "Antidote" a most furious letter to the Protestants of Ulster, calling upon them to arm against the Catholics, and announcing that he will come in March next and place himself at their head, and this because the Government are so weak as to despise the danger of the Protestants, and to decline supplying them with arms. The law officers pronounced it to be a most inflammatory paper, and a fit subject for prosecution.

'I much regret that Sir H. Lees should have selected this moment for the publication of his ravings in a shape to attract the notice of the law officers. Many will coincide with his view of the necessity of being armed, and will think with him that the Government is to blame in not having arrayed all the Protestant part of the community. They will not, therefore, see much guilt in the having called upon one portion of the people to arm against the other in

defiance of the authority of Government. Others too, considering Sir Harcourt half mad, will extenuate his offence. On the other hand, to omit prosecuting would betray a partiality towards an outrageous Orangeman, and would excite a feeling that O'Connell had been unjustly selected as an object of attack.'

Mr. Peel, committed by the action of Lord Wellesley, loyally stood by him in both cases, but Mr. Plunket's unlucky selection of words from O'Connell's speech created a difficulty about the foreign policy of Canning, who, supported by the Prime Minister and by Mr. Peel, had recognised the Spanish American republics, against the protest of the Duke of Wellington and of the King.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

'(Private and confidential.)

'Whitehall: Dec. 30, 1824.

'Inclosed are the answers which I sent to Lord Wellesley and Goulburn respecting the prosecution of Mr. O'Connell. It is of no use now discussing whether the words chosen for prosecution were happily chosen or not. They have been chosen. The Irish Government is committed, and I see no alternative but to give them a decided support.

'The King says that he sees much inconsistency in prosecuting O'Connell, and afterwards recognising Bolivar. The Duke of Wellington wrote from Windsor that the King would make a communication to me on the subject. His (the King's) view was that you cannot do both. Prosecute O'Connell, and do not treat with Columbia. However, the King has not written to me, and I am glad of it.

'You ask me what I think of O'Connell's union with Cobbett. I think it very strange, because as Cobbett brought over the bones of Paine, and Paine was no friend to any religion, and still less to the Roman Catholic, this union with Cobbett must, I should think, disgust the fanatic and even the really religious Catholic. O'Connell is a very clever man, but in some things a very foolish and indiscreet one. Probably he took up Cobbett (who is now occupied in proving

that the Reformation was a great curse) without much reflection,<sup>5</sup> and having forgotten the bones.'

*Lord Palmerston to Mr. Peel.*

' Stanhope Street : Dec. 30, 1824.

' I am very much obliged to you for the perusal of the interesting correspondence which I now return to you ; nothing can be wiser than the course which the Government have adopted upon this important subject. The continuance of this Irish Parliament could not be permitted, but their suppression is a proposition which it is peculiarly fitting that the Government should upon its own responsibility make, and which it would on every account be inexpedient to refer to a previous Committee.

' They will be no bad hands at law-making, however, who shall succeed in framing the Bill you want.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Goulburn.*

' Whitehall : Dec. 30, 1824.

' You must write to me very fully upon the subject of the Bill for putting down the Catholic Association.

' Let me know, in strict confidence of course, what were Lord Wellesley's feelings upon getting my answer to his despatch. I earnestly hope that we can act together in these arduous times with perfect cordiality and a thorough good understanding.

' I will do all that I can to effect this, consistently with my determination to act decidedly, and to call things by their right names. The time is past for complimenting into loyalty and submission to the law people who avow their hostility to the British name and connection.

' The Bill will require the most serious consideration. I am no lawyer, and I have conferred with none, therefore my ideas of a Bill must be very imperfect ; but such as they are, you shall have them.

' Understand that I am just writing to you now what I

<sup>5</sup> Before long O'Connell was abusing Cobbett as 'a vile vagabond, malignant, treacherous, false.'

should say to you if you were sitting opposite to me—what occurs to me at the moment, without any partiality for my offspring, which you may send if you please to the Foundling Hospital for similar bantlings. I have framed my preamble upon the model of the Act of 1799.

‘Then must follow clauses prohibiting, for a time to be limited, societies meeting from time to time by adjournment, which perform such acts as those which the Association has performed.

‘Let the Act be so framed that it will extend to all political confederacies, Orange lodges among the rest. If there be a doubt, let the Lord Lieutenant have a power to disperse any assembly which he may think dangerous to the public peace.

‘If it be said that committees for the promotion of trade, or for mere charity, or for religious purposes, might be dispersed, save them by an exceptive clause, or enable the Lord Lieutenant to grant licences to such meetings.

‘Let the duration of the Bill be for two years. There is my draft for you, and nothing will please me more than to find it a miserable one compared to that which you will send to me.’

The strong prejudices of the King on the Catholic and other questions tended to interfere often with the exercise of patronage by his ministers, but there was seldom a direct conflict. In March 1824, Lord Bathurst, then at Windsor with the King, wrote that the King had seen in the newspaper that the Recorder was dead; if true, he feared that the aldermen might elect to the vacancy the Common Serjeant, Mr. Denman. To this appointment, after what Mr. Denman in the trial of Queen Caroline had said against him, the King could never bring himself to consent. He trusted, therefore, that the Government would exert themselves to prevent his being exposed to such a proposition. Mr. Peel replied that the Recorder was not dead.

In July a letter was written on behalf of the Cabinet to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, concurring with him in opinion ‘that a disposition should be manifested to admit the Roman Catholics of Ireland to a fair proportion of the emoluments and honours to which they are eligible by law,’ but not to issue patents of precedence.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Wellesley.*

‘ July 8, 1824.

‘ It appears to us that it would be better in every point of view to confer upon Mr. Bellew, or upon any other Roman Catholic barrister of similar pretensions, some office of trust and emolument to which a Roman Catholic is eligible, which, having active duty attached to it, would equally serve to mark the confidence of the Government in the impartiality and integrity of the individual, and their disposition to give a fair consideration to the professional claims of Roman Catholic barristers.’

On seeing this despatch, the King wrote :

‘ (Private.)

‘ Windsor Castle : July 7, 1824.

‘ The King much approves of Mr. Peel’s letter to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, because it refuses letters of precedence to a Roman Catholic barrister ; but the King assures Mr. Peel that if the Cabinet had thought proper to recommend it, the King on no account would have consented to it. The King desires Mr. Peel to remember this, as it may be a guide for his future conduct relative to the Catholic question.’

Among the general letters of this year is one of interest relating to plots against the Duke of Wellington three years before in the French capital.

*The Duke of Wellington to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Sept. 19, 1824.

‘ When I was at Paris in 1821 I did hear of an intention on the part of the son of Marshal Ney, and of some of the officers, to insult and provoke me to fight a duel. There is no doubt that such a scheme was in discussion at the time among the “ officiers à demi-solde,” but not the slightest attempt was ever made to carry it into execution.

‘ I believe that the idea originated in the “ Morning

Chronicle" and the Opposition papers in England; and the scheme was thence discussed in France. But all the respectable people in France pronounced their abhorrence of it. Many, among whom were Marshals Oudinot, Macdonald, and Marmont, spoke to me about it, and I believe that the police in Paris attended me, particularly when I was at the theatres. But I must say that I never went more frequently about the Boulevards, theatres, and other places of public resort, and I was never received with more respect.'

Other letters are the first of a long series showing the well-earned gratitude of Lord Eldon for protection against critics in the Lower House.

*Lord Eldon to Mr. Peel.*

'Feb. 10, 1824.

'I hope you will be so good as to take some care of the Court of Chancery in the House of Commons. It is not possible to go on in my office, the object of constant attack, which will never cease till the present Chancellor is removed. He is a nuisance, therefore, to the Administration.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Eldon.*

'Feb. 10, 1824.

'I shall be most happy to confer with you on the motions respecting the Court of Chancery. Every consideration arising out of my sincere esteem for you, and the knowledge of the motives of those who attack you, would induce me zealously at least to co-operate with more able and competent defenders in resisting these attacks.

'Depend upon it, my dear Chancellor, they can make no impression. Men ask themselves who is the ablest and honestest man who ever presided in the Court of Chancery; and the decisive answer to that question, if it does not silence malignity and political hostility, at least disarms them of the power to rob you of your hardly earned and justly acquired honours.'



*Lord Eldon to Mr. Peel.*

‘Feb. 25, 1824.

‘I cannot go forth this morning to my work and labour without having expressed to you how very much I feel myself obliged to you. Pray accept my most cordial thanks.’

*Lord Eldon to Lady Frances Bankes (his daughter).*

‘Feb. 25, 1824.

‘At my instance Mr. Peel, in an admirable speech, moved for a Commission, as a great merit on my part in aiming at improvement, and this threw Mr. Williams &c. upon their backs, and they did not venture to divide.’

‘Feb. 26.—Peel’s speech was, I understand, most eloquent, and towards me expressive of regard amounting to affection. Lord Stowell came out of the House of Commons in tears, he was so affected by it.

‘In short Mr. Peel set me up in public opinion against what I hold in utter detestation—being influenced by sordid motives and feelings. Being set right in this view of my character will render me happier than I have been, as long as I live.’

A further proof of Lord Eldon’s confidence in Mr. Peel is given by a request for his advice as to withdrawing in Court some hasty language used under misapprehension.

*Lord Eldon to Mr. Peel.*

‘March 1, 1824.

‘Pray consider this for me. In my situation I ought not to have any difficulty in setting myself right in matters of this sort; and when my mind is once convinced that I have done a wrong, my peace of mind, as well as a sense of the justice due to others, will never permit me to think the consequences of acknowledging that I have so done anything like so intolerable as leaving that wrong unrepaid.’

Several letters bear witness to Mr. Peel's enlightened zeal for the interests of literature, science, and art.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

'(Confidential.)

' Whitehall : April 29, 1824.

' I write this for the purpose of bringing under your consideration (and I do so much more on public than on private grounds) the expediency of bestowing some mark of favour on Mr. Gaisford, the Greek Professor in the University of Oxford.

' There is no man at Oxford more generally esteemed and respected. He is perhaps not so much heard of as many men less earnest than himself, because he still devotes nearly the whole of his life to severe study; but I believe that everyone will admit that he is the first scholar, at least in Greek literature, in Europe, or that, at any rate, he has but one competitor.

' Although I was for a short time his pupil at Oxford, he never has mentioned the subject to me, and from his reserved habits and great independence of character, I doubt whether he could be induced to make an application on his own behalf. Many others have, however, repeatedly expressed to me an earnest wish that the Crown would take some opportunity of distinguishing so very eminent a man by some signal mark of favour.'

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

'(Private and confidential.)

' Fife House : May 2, 1824.

' I am fully aware of Gaisford's merits, and shall be happy to find an opportunity of marking my sense of them. But it is really a cruel thing that the patronage of the Crown as to Church matters should be divided between the Minister and the Chancellor, and that all the public claims should fall upon the former. The Chancellor has nine livings to the Minister's one. With respect to these he does occasionally attend to local claims, but he has, besides, four

Cathedrals, and to no one of these Cathedrals has any man of distinguished learning or merit been promoted.'

*Sir Humphry Davy to Mr. Peel.*

'Jan. 26, 1824.

'You take so much interest in everything belonging to the progress and application of science, that I am sure you will be pleased to hear of a result which I have lately obtained—a very simple mode of preventing the corrosion or decay of the copper sheeting used for covering ships. The decay, I find, depends upon the chemical action of sea-water. I long ago ascertained that all chemical changes may be suspended, destroyed, or exalted by electricity; and by the electrical action of a very small mass of tin in contact with a very large surface of copper its change is entirely prevented, and the covering of our ships of war made indestructible. I have communicated this discovery to the Admiralty, and I hope to see it in actual practice at Deptford next week.'

*Mr. Peel to Sir Humphry Davy.*

'Jan. 30, 1824.

'I heard with very great satisfaction of your important discovery, and believe me that no small part of it arose from a warm interest in whatever can conduce to your honour, and raise your high name.

'We greatly regretted that you were obliged to make so short a day at Lulworth. Our sport in the fields even increased after you left us, and made us regret that you were not there to partake of it. Three guns killed 430 head in the last three days.'

*Mr. Peel to Sir Humphry Davy.*

'Stanhope Street: Dec. 13, 1824.

'I have been turning in my mind what passed between us on the subject of forming in this country an establish-

ment something like the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, which may contribute to the study of that branch of natural history which concerns animal life.

‘There are few things of which a country can more justly boast than splendid institutions for the promotion of science, few ways in which it can more advantageously apply its wealth than in their establishment and maintenance. Considering the riches of our country, its vast colonial possessions, including almost every variety of climate and every species of natural production, our means and our habits of exploring those parts of the globe which offer no temptation to fixed settlement, but still abound with much that is curious and valuable to the lovers of natural history, we ought to be ashamed of the beggarly account of boxes, almost worse than empty, which comprise our specimens of animal life.

‘I have spoken to no one on the subject, but I should feel proud of contributing my humble efforts to rescue this country from what I think a just imputation of indifference and neglect.

‘I wish you would confidentially communicate to me your opinion upon the best mode of forming such an establishment. Do you think it should be separated from, or connected with, the British Museum? I own that, what with marbles, butterflies, statues, manuscripts, books, and pictures, I think the Museum is a farrago that distracts attention.

‘This communication is, I need hardly say, quite unauthorised by the Government. I purposely defer speaking to Lord Liverpool until my thoughts are a little more digested.’

In response to this invitation, Sir Humphry Davy furnished within a week a first sketch of such an establishment for natural history as he would propose; one not devoted, as in Paris, either to pure science or to popular amusement, but to the useful and at the same time amusing purpose of taming now races of animals serviceable to man. ‘Hitherto,’ he says, ‘almost all the animals introduced have been those domesticated by savage tribes. The

resources of civilisation have not been applied to these purposes. There can be little doubt that all the animals under the same parallels of latitude as our own island would flourish here without difficulty, and this alone would give us fifty or sixty new varieties.' After giving some details, he proceeds :

'Could the British Museum be divided into three distinct departments, each with a separate government, everything would become easy—a great Public Library, a Gallery of Art, a Gallery of Science. People then would only see what they liked. Students might profit by particular collections without being jostled by the mob that comes to see everything. And the officers at the head of each department must be distinguished men.

'We have had no great naturalist since Ray, which, I believe, is a good deal owing to this, that Britain affords no means of studying natural history. Cuvier and Daubenton have been formed by the splendid collections in the Jardin des Plantes, and there is certainly no dearth of genius or talent in England. As you justly observe, with our immense means and resources from our maritime and colonial empire we might even possess the most magnificent collection in the world.

'I know so well your highly patriotic and liberal feelings that I am sure you would rather awaken than await public opinion on every occasion connected with the prosperity or glory of the country.'

Mr. Peel replied, highly commending such scientific institutions as the best ornaments of which a country can boast. Another letter exhibits him as the liberal and judicious patron of Art.

*Mr. Peel to Sir Walter Scott.*

'Whitehall: July 7, 1824.

'I am building a new house, and in it a gallery for pictures, and I want above all things a portrait of you, but no pencil but Lawrence's will satisfy me. He is to paint for me his own portrait, Davy's, and the Duke of Welling-

ton's, and he has painted for me Lord Eldon's and Lord Stowell's. So much for the fine arts, science, war, and law. For every branch of literature there is a "Knight of the Shire, who represents them all." And my gallery will be incomplete till his portrait is added to the number. Are you likely to be soon in London, and when you come will you give me so much time as will enable Lawrence to gratify my wishes?'

## CHAPTER XI.

1825-1826.

Failure of Irish Prosecutions—Proposed Endowment of Catholic Clergy—The King's Protestant Minister—Defeated in the Commons—Tenders Resignation—O'Connell and Plunket—Protestant Reaction—A Matrimonial Catholic Question—Combination Laws—Monetary Crisis—Banking in England and in Scotland—Lloyd on Priestly Absolution—Mr. Peel a Heretic—Gold Medals for Harrow and for the Royal Society—Dawson at Derry—Catholic Education—Currency—Criminal Law Reform—Sydney Smith on Secondary Punishments—County Police.

THE year 1825 began with a check to the Government in Ireland. On New Year's Day the Grand Jury threw out the bill against Mr. O'Connell. In reply to inquiries from the Prime Minister as to their probable motives, Mr. Peel wrote accepting their verdict as honest, and firmly upholding Canning's liberal policy in South America against the disapproval of the King and of the Duke of Wellington.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

Whitehall: Jan. 7, 1825.

'I believe the Grand Jury to have been a respectable one, and I see no ground for questioning their motives. Probably the evidence given to them was imperfect.

'I saw the King, and had a long conversation with him. I told him I thought nothing could be more inconsistent with the dignity of a Power like England than to permit her advance in a great measure, on which she had taken her resolve, to be impeded for an hour by an Irish prosecution, and that I saw nothing in that prosecution and in the result of it but reasons for steadily pursuing our course with regard to South America.'

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

‘Jan. 1, 1825.

‘Whatever difference there may be between us as to the effect of the prosecution of O’Connell upon the measure of treating with Columbia (and that there should be the slightest difference is to me a matter of the sincerest regret), I think you will agree with me that there is no alternative but to give the Irish Government a decided support, and that it would be useless to disturb their minds by expressing any regret that they selected for prosecution the passage about Bolivar. The step was actually taken when I heard anything of the matter, and I thought it but fair (before the issue could be known) to commit myself personally to the support of what was at least well intended.’

*The Duke of Wellington to Mr. Peel.*

‘Apethorpe: Jan. 2, 1825.

‘You are quite mistaken if you suppose that I think that O’Connell ought not to be prosecuted. But I confess I agree with the King that the moment to recognise the rebel Bolivar is not luckily chosen.

‘I have always been of the same opinion on this subject. Bolivar is now engaged in a rebellion in Peru, and at the moment at which we are going to prosecute Mr. O’Connell for exciting the people of Ireland to rebel, we have authorised our agent in Columbia to decide whether he will or will not recognise Bolivar in the name of the King. We are all right in Ireland, but the mischief is that we are wrong elsewhere.’

A few days later came tidings that the proceedings against the Orangeman had also failed. This was taken quietly enough in England, Lord Liverpool simply remarking that ‘Plunket is very unfortunate in his prosecutions.’

About the same time Mr. Peel wrote confidentially to friends in Ireland his views on the Catholic Association, and on proposals to endow the Catholic clergy.



*Mr. Peel to Mr. Leslie Foster.*

‘(Private and confidential.)

‘Whitehall: Jan. 17, 1825.

‘We must not be so terrified by the technical difficulties of framing a law, or by the clamour against its sweeping clauses, as to overlook the benefit of a parliamentary declaration against the Catholic Convention.

‘Let Parliament say, This ought not to be, and shall not be. Its voice if delivered with proper energy will be heard, though it may not drown such practised organs as those of Mr. O’Connell and Mr. Sheil.

‘It will cheer the well affected, perhaps detach some timid dependants on the Association—at any rate rescue us from the disgrace of remaining passive, while a confederacy is forming which at an hour’s notice may be directed against the English, who, according to Mr. O’Connell, “arrived in Ireland one fine morning about 600 years since, and have done nothing but disturb and devastate it.”

‘Why should we leave to the Association the choice of weapons, and the time and place of meeting?’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Gregory.*

‘Whitehall: March 21, 1825.

‘The payment of the Roman Catholic clergy by the State is a plausible proposal. It is said that it will lessen their influence over their flocks, and diminish their hostility to the Establishment in Church and State; that the experiment was fairly tried with the Presbyterians, and that it entirely succeeded, converting their clergy from factious politicians into quiet ministers of religion.

‘But on the other hand the payment of the Roman Catholic prelaty and priesthood by the State, coupled with absolute removal of civil disabilities, is, in fact, a qualified establishment of the Roman Catholic religion.

‘To this it is replied, You have already a qualified establishment of the Presbyterian religion in Ireland, and where is the mischief?’

‘But we know there are great differences in the case, differences arising out of the nature of the two systems of religious faith and discipline, out of the respective numbers of the people who prefer those religions as compared with the Protestants of the Church of England, and above all, out of this consideration, that the Roman Catholic was once the religion of the State, and possessed the temporalities which now belong to another Church.

‘Whether these differences are sufficient to make that course which was adopted with respect to the Presbyterian Church inexpedient with respect to the Roman Catholic is another question, but they are differences which ought to be well considered.

‘The existence of such a body in the State as the Roman Catholic prelacy and priesthood, liberally endowed out of the public funds, yet unconnected with the Crown by any feeling of gratitude, or any hope of preferment on the part of individual ministers, may be a less evil than its entire disunion from the State. But it is a novel, and to my mind a fearful experiment.’

The King now began to express strong opinions on the Catholic question, exhibiting great distrust alike of Lord Wellesley, of Canning, and of the House of Commons.

#### *The King to Mr. Peel.*

‘(Most private.)

‘Carlton House: Feb. 1, 1825.

‘The King has read with great attention the despatch to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, which, upon the whole, he approves. But if he had had the opportunity of seeing Mr. Peel, the despatch would have been of a less temporising nature.

‘Mr. Peel must always remember that he writes as the King’s Protestant Minister, and is therefore on this question the King’s animus.

‘The Lord Lieutenant’s despatch is deceptive, perhaps unintentionally, but to the King’s feeling on this delicate

and most important subject savours—of what? An enemy in the camp!

‘The King is too much aware of Mr. Peel’s delicacy of feeling and conduct, and therefore it is that the King expresses himself thus plainly. It is quite evident that it would be the height of folly to permit the House of Commons to form themselves into squads, or “committees” as they are called, for the purpose of delivering opinions upon the Catholic question.

‘Lord Wellesley must be watched upon this question, and also Mr. Canning.

‘G. R.’

To the general public, also, the Catholic question continued to be an exciting topic. The next person to become a suspect was the Prime Minister, for whom, however, Mr. Peel was able to vouch.

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

‘Admiralty: March 11, 1825.

‘In the City yesterday they were talking of Lord Liverpool’s supposed conversion to popery, when one of the party said that he knew it as a fact that at the Cabinet dinner on Wednesday the Ministers had decided to take up Catholic Emancipation as a Government question, in consequence of which you had resigned. The same story William Lamb mentioned in the House of Commons, as having had it from Lord Holland, with an addition that you had gone to tell the Chancellor what you had done, when he answered that he generally approved your principles and proceedings, but that he thought in taking the step of absolute resignation you were “rather hasty.”

‘Now I dare say the whole story was invented for the sake of this last piece of drollery, but the waggery and wit of Holland House had evaporated between Kensington and Cornhill, and what was a joke in the West became a pure fact among the wise men of the East.’

*Mr. Peel to Dr. Lloyd.*

‘ Whitehall: March 12, 1825.

‘ I have not a doubt that the reports relating to a change in Lord Liverpool’s opinions on the Catholic question were designedly circulated for the purpose of weakening the opposition to Sir Francis Burdett’s Bill. Lord Liverpool himself directed a contradiction of those reports to be inserted in the “*Courier*.” Some people do not consider the contradiction so decisive as it might have been, but it is not very usual for the Prime Minister of this country to contradict in a newspaper by express authority from himself the reports of another newspaper.

‘ I have, however, no difficulty in saying that Lord Liverpool’s opinions upon the Catholic question are not changed, and that there is not the slightest foundation for those rumours, which, it appears from your letter, have reached Oxford and have made some impression there.’

But the question had again come to the front. The Catholic Relief Bill of this year, drawn by O’Connell, supported by Canning and Plunket, and opposed by Peel, passed its second reading by a majority of 27, and its third reading by a majority of 21. Another of their Bills, for raising the electoral franchise in Ireland so as to disfranchise a large number of electors, was read a second time by a majority of 38; and a resolution in favour of endowing the Catholic clergy was carried by a majority of 43. These four divisions in rapid succession, affirming a policy for Ireland opposed to his, determined Mr. Peel to tender his resignation.

He waited on the Prime Minister and told him that, having been left in a minority in that branch of the Legislature of which he was a member, he anxiously desired to be relieved from office. In reply, Lord Liverpool represented to him the difficulty he should experience in filling up the vacancy, insisted on the importance of the Home Secretary’s opinions being in accordance with those of the Prime Minister, and finally intimated that Mr. Peel’s retirement must cause his own. Foreseeing this difficulty, the Prime Minister had written :

*Lord Liverpool to the Duke of Wellington.*

‘ Fife House: April 1, 1825.

‘ I cannot overlook what may be Peel’s course of conduct upon this occasion. If he resigns, I shall be called upon to fill up his office, which under the circumstances would be the most important office in the State. And how could I fill it up, when I had it in contemplation not to remain myself in the Government many weeks?’

On April 25, Lord Fingall and other Roman Catholic Irish noblemen waited on Mr. Peel with an address to the King, desiring an appointment to present it. The address, after fervent expressions of loyalty, and pointed reference to the paternal feelings expressed and the hopes excited during the recent royal visit to Ireland, went on to prove the fitness of the time for ‘accomplishing the entire of his Majesty’s benevolent wishes and designs.’

‘The whole of Ireland reposes in profound tranquillity, the law without the aid of any extraordinary powers everywhere receives voluntary obedience, and all classes of your Majesty’s subjects now acknowledge the wisdom of your parting admonition that we should love one another. But there still remains one great act of legislative wisdom wanting to complete our happiness, and to secure its permanence, and every circumstance seems to concur in rendering its adoption at the present time seasonable and auspicious. The felicitous posture in all the foreign and domestic relations of the Empire has disembarrassed the Legislature from other cares, and renders it impossible to attribute their concession in our behalf to any less elevated feeling than the love of justice and the sense of right. For the accomplishment of this great object of national adjustment, which shall divest the future of all inquietude, and consign all that is painful in the past, except its moral, to oblivion, we look mainly to the wisdom and magnanimity of our King.’

Mr. Peel arranged that the address should be presented, but on the same day the Duke of York made his celebrated speech vowing unalterable opposition to the Catholic claims, ‘whatever might be his situation in life, so help him God.’ The speech was printed in letters of gold, as ‘a record of the sentiments of the Heir Presumptive, to descend as a bequest to future ages,’ and the Peers, by a majority of 48, threw out the Bill.

All this time both Lord Liverpool's resignation and Mr. Peel's were still in question.

*Lord Bathurst to the Duke of Wellington.*

*(Private and confidential.)*

‘ Stanhope Street: May 6, 1825.

‘ I inclose to you a letter from Lord Liverpool in answer to one in which I endeavoured to press upon him the difference between his situation and that of Mr. Peel. You will see that he rests the necessity of his resignation entirely on that of Mr. Peel. I am by no means sure that he is not desirous that Peel should reconsider his decision, and perhaps if Peel were aware what the result would be, that he would be considered as the person who had given up the Protestant cause and broken up the party (for it is clear that Lord Liverpool would justify himself to his friends, by pleading his difficulties in consequence of the resignation of the other), he might be induced to pause. You are the only person, I am sure, who could have that influence over him, and I think it will be well to make an attempt in good earnest.’

*Lord Bathurst to Mr. Peel.*

*(Most private and confidential.)*

‘ Stanhope Street: May 16, 1825.

‘ I have abstained from importuning you with advice, not simply because I am always unwilling to obtrude it where it is not asked, but because I know the Duke of Wellington has already exerted himself to dissuade you from your resolution. As the time, however, approaches when the decision will be finally taken, I cannot answer to myself not to entreat you to reflect upon the consequences. Your resignation will occasion Lord Liverpool's. His will cause the dissolution of the Government. He must justify his resignation by the necessity which yours imposes upon him, and upon you alone therefore rests the responsibility.

‘ I beg of you, then, to consider—Is it fair to the Church of England thus suddenly to surrender a cause which they

have (whether wisely or not, is another question) in so marked a manner made their own? Even the interval between this and the end of the session would have spared their being exposed to laughter for this unexpected triumph over them.

‘I will not call to your recollection to what a personally painful struggle you are exposing the King, by making a change of councils necessary, nor what may be felt by the University, who placed their confidence in you at so early a period of your political life. But is it fair—by the public, who are doing you at this moment justice for the firmness of temper with which you have singly as a minister in the House of Commons maintained your opinions? That your resignation in consequence of what has happened is not expected, is a pregnant proof of what will be thought of it. The personal contrarieties which you experience from your official position with others, although they may account for your action, will not, I am afraid, be allowed as a satisfactory justification.

‘I am aware of the popularity which is apt to follow any display of indifference to office; but you will find that public men, who have by their resignations exposed the country to great trouble and sudden convulsions, are not easily forgiven. The public confidence in them is shaken in a way which is not soon recovered.

‘I beg you to excuse the frankness with which I have written. Do not impute it to any other cause than a sincere interest in your character, as well as a conscientious solicitude for the well-being of the country.’

Under pressure of this kind, ‘I was induced,’ says Mr. Peel, ‘to waive my wish, and to consent to remain, until a new Parliament had pronounced an opinion.’<sup>1</sup>

This decision was a disappointment to O’Connell, who had been writing confidentially (May 9) to the Irish Attorney-General: ‘I have good reason to be convinced that the entire body of the Opposition would readily join Mr. Canning, the Grenvilles, and

<sup>1</sup> Hansard’s *Debates*, May 1, 1827.

Lord Liverpool, to the exclusion of Lord Eldon, Peel, and their followers.' The resistance of the Upper House, O'Connell's friends thought, might be overcome thus: 'In the event of the Catholic Relief Bill being thrown out in the Lords, every Catholic in England and Ireland should call for gold at all the banks, and then, to the extent of their properties, add to the embarrassment now created by the excessive rate of exchange.' This correspondence Mr. Plunket does not appear to have communicated to his colleagues Lord Liverpool and Mr. Peel, or to Mr. Canning, who later in the year took occasion to express his great regret that on the Catholic question, and (he believed) on that alone, Mr. Peel and he were not at one.

*Mr. Canning to Mr. Peel.*

'Seaford: Nov. 26, 1825.

'It is a great and constant source of regret to me that there is any subject on which we cannot communicate freely with each other. Happily there is but that one [the Catholic question], I believe, on which we do not cordially agree.'

From these letters it appears how exactly the reverse of the truth was the statement which, twenty years later, Lord George Bentinck accused Sir Robert Peel of having made in 1829, namely, 'that he had changed his opinions on Catholic Emancipation in 1825, and had communicated that change of opinion to the Earl of Liverpool.' On the contrary, he had told Lord Liverpool that, being defeated in the House of Commons on the Catholic question, but standing firm to his own opinion, he must resign; and only after a lapse of six weeks, and solicited by his Protestant colleagues, did he consent to remain, expressly in order to support Lord Liverpool in holding out against the Catholic claims, until there might once more be (as, in fact, in 1827 there was) a Protestant majority to reject them. Such a reaction in Great Britain in favour of Protestantism was foreseen by Canning as a probable result of the intemperance of O'Connell and his colleagues.

*Mr. Canning to Mr. Plunket.*

'Dec. 13, 1825.

'The late most unfortunate and ill-advised conduct of the Roman Catholic leaders in Ireland, and the mischievous



co-operation with their intemperance of the fury and violence of the Roman Catholic Ultras lay as well as ecclesiastical abroad, are fast producing their natural fruits, in a most decided alienation of the English public mind from any favourable or even patient consideration of the Catholic question.'

Several important legal matters occupied Mr. Peel's attention in this year. In June he carried through the House of Commons, without a dissentient voice, a Bill for preventing frivolous writs in error, and wrote to Lord Liverpool, entrusting it to his care in the House of Lords, where it was to be opposed. The Bill was founded on a report from Commissioners to the effect that of 1,197 such writs in three years nine only appeared to have been argued, the remainder might be considered as brought merely for delay.

On the Bills which Mr. Peel was preparing for amendment of the Criminal Law, he consulted the judges, with the approval of Lord Eldon, who himself offered to confer with them.

In the recess Mr. Peel was much engaged in rearranging the order of judges in Scotland, in which task he sought aid from the English Lord Chancellor, but without much result.

He also appointed a Royal Commission to report on the Scottish Universities, applying to Dr. Lloyd and to Lord Palmerston for the names of persons from Oxford and Cambridge best qualified to initiate reforms. But his zeal in this direction stopped short of approving a suggestion to found a separate University for the Scottish Highlands.

*Mr. Peel to the Lord Advocate.*

'Whitehall : Sept. 28, 1825.

'A stranger would suppose that Scotland was amply supplied with universities. I have heard of an account of Aberdeen which begins, "Aberdeen, like England, hath her two universities."

'However, you will see my correspondent laments over the deficiency of universities in the north-west, and proposes to garrison Fort Augustus with professors.

'I presume that this scheme may be knocked on the

head? Surely there is an advantage in letting a native of Skye see a little more of the world than Fort Augustus would exhibit to him, and in enabling him to captivate his parishioners with all the polish of a Glasgow education.'

In October came tidings from Dublin that Lord Wellesley was about to marry, the lady being Mrs. Paterson, an American and a Roman Catholic. The Lord Lieutenant being *ex officio* necessarily a Protestant, this threatened to raise the Catholic question in a new and delicate form. The wedding, however, took place, and the Roman Catholic archbishop appeared there in his robes, which the younger brother of the bridegroom considered 'very improper.'

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

'(Private.)

'Walmer Castle: Oct. 11, 1825.

'The report of the marriage is quite new to me. I shall not, however, be surprised at it. I know Lord Wellesley's susceptibility, and the lady, if she has taken it into her head, is quite equal to the accomplishment of her purpose. Under the circumstances of his present situation it would be a very strange and awkward event. Under any other circumstances I am not sure it would not be for his advantage. She has no family, she would entirely govern him, but I think she has sense enough to govern him better than he governs himself.'

*The Duke of Wellington to Mr. Peel.*

'Strathfieldsaye: Nov. 3, 1825.

'You see that the marriage in Dublin has been celebrated. Allow me to ask you, Is not the appearance of the Roman Catholic archbishop *in pontificalibus* contrary to law? It is at all events very improper, considering what the King determined on that subject.'

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

‘Whitehall: Nov. 4, 1825.

‘I apprehend there is a difference between the law in force in England and that of Ireland as to the appearance of a Roman Catholic bishop in the robes of his order, and that it would not be contrary to law in Ireland if a Roman Catholic bishop were publicly to officiate in such robes. It certainly would have been the best course to adhere to the precedent laid down by the King.’

An Act obtained by Mr. Hume repealing wholesale thirty-five Acts against combination of workmen, had led to such antagonism between capital and labour that numerous petitions were presented to the Home Secretary. These he referred to a select committee, and ultimately Mr. Hume’s Act was repealed. The Home Secretary’s own opinions appear in a letter of thanks for an address on this subject sent to him by Mr. Jeffrey.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Leonard Horner.*

‘Whitehall: Nov. 29, 1825.

‘I hope that we have now seen the worst of the evils of combination—I speak of that combination which strikes at the perfect free will of the labourer. It appears to me that they attained the height which they reached from a combination of causes of each of which the force has been abated.

‘There was a desire on the part of the workman to make an experiment of the new powers which the total repeal of the Combination Laws gave him. Sufficient precautions were not taken in the Act of 1823, the first substitute for the old Combination Laws, to prevent that species of annoyance which numbers can exercise towards individuals, short of personal violence and actual threat, but nearly as effectual for its object.

‘There certainly was at the same time a great and sudden increase in the demand for labour. I think the law with regard to combination as it at present stands is

founded upon just principles, and I believe it will ultimately be as effectual as law can be.

‘Men who, as Mr. Jeffrey justly observes, have no property except their manual skill and strength ought to be allowed to confer together, if they think fit, for the purpose of determining at what rate they will sell that property. But the possession of such a privilege justifies, while it renders more necessary, the severe punishment of any attempt to control the free will of others.

‘A conviction of the uselessness of such attempts will, however, be much more serviceable than the fear of their punishment.’

The winter of 1825-6 was marked by a violent monetary disturbance and panic. The country banks generally were in an unsound state, and were driven to apply to the Bank of England for exceptional assistance. In this crisis Sir Robert Peel's familiarity with the requirements of trade enabled him to make suggestions which were found practically useful.

*Sir Robert Peel to Mr. Peel.*

‘Drayton: Dec. 15, 1825.

‘Since you left me, I have had a visit from my friend Mr. Attwood, who informs me that, in consequence of the many recent failures in London, public confidence is very much shaken in Birmingham and other large commercial towns, from the want of a circulating medium of a stable nature. Gold is in a considerable degree withdrawn from this country at a time when an increased circulating medium is required to maintain our extended commercial and manufacturing dealings. If the mischief is not immediately arrested, and confidence restored, the national tranquillity may be expected to be speedily interrupted, and our public revenue to give way to general distress.

‘Government alone is able to afford timely aid, and should encourage the Bank to lay out very large sums in the purchase of Exchequer bills, and should also induce them at this critical time to discount all good promissory

notes and good bills, though of a description neglected in quiet times. If the issuing of one-pound notes also is not immediately adopted by the Bank, the country will soon be visited by unparalleled misfortune, and general confusion will succeed to our late happy situation.

‘As such a provision will be attended with a considerable loss of time, in the mean time everything practicable should be adopted to prevent the country bankers from withdrawing their notes from circulation. Our commercial ship should not be exposed to the violence of the waves merely for want of a rudder.

‘I wish you to see Mr. Attwood, who is well acquainted with the subject of my letter, and can give you valuable information on this most important matter.’

*Mr. Peel to Sir Robert Peel.*

*(Private and confidential.)*

Whitehall: Dec. 16, 1825.

‘I saw Mr. Attwood immediately on his presenting your letter. I went with him myself to Lord Liverpool’s, and I got an interview for him with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, without a moment’s delay.

‘It is, of course, very difficult for the Government to offer any suggestion to a commercial body like the Bank of England, which has its own particular interest to attend to, with respect to the species of security on which it should advance its funds. I have done, however, everything which could be done in the case of Birmingham. The ultimate decision must be left with the Bank, but the Bank knows that it is the opinion of the Government that accommodation on good security should be liberally granted during the present pressure.

‘You will be glad to hear that two of your suggestions have been already acted upon. The Bank has applied a portion of its funds to the purchase of Exchequer bills, and in the course of this day there has been an issue of one-pound notes by the Bank of England.’

Mr. Attwood had laid before Mr. Peel the following information :

‘ A universal run upon all the country banks makes a universal demand from them upon the London banks. These latter cannot possibly stand such an enormous drain, they go on themselves but from day to day. On Friday evening one of the oldest and most eminent houses in the City had not made up its mind to open its doors the next morning until eleven o’clock. Upon the above upwards of sixty country banks draw. There are three other City houses who have each upwards of sixty country banks drawing from them. These three houses have each had severe runs upon them, and if the above-mentioned house stops, they must themselves instantly shut, thus at once returning the bills of 250 country bankers more. Smith Payne and Jones Loyd will take up no more country banks.

‘ Seventy country banks have already stopped in less than one week, having a circulation of cash notes of from 20,000*l.* to 200,000*l.* The average cannot be less than 50,000*l.* each, which gives a total of three millions sterling of cash notes all rendered a loss to the holders in one week, the holders being principally poor people, whose daily bread depended upon these notes. Seventeen more country banks had their bills returned by the London banks last night, and among these were the most affluent and solid country banks. If gentlemen say that other stronger houses remain, it is not true.’

This alarming crisis, with its grave responsibilities, forced on the Home Secretary’s attention the perils arising from an unsound banking system, especially the disasters it might bring upon the working classes from waste of capital, and impressed on him the urgent need for reforms such as he afterwards carried into law.

From the manufacturing districts of Staffordshire Mr. Peel obtained information through a friend, to whom he wrote freely on the necessity for a review of the system of banking in England, suggesting that it might with advantage be assimilated to that established in Scotland.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. E. J. Littleton.*<sup>2</sup>

‘*(Private and confidential.)*

‘ Whitehall : Dec. 23, 1825.

‘ I am exceedingly obliged to you for the detailed and very useful communications which you have recently sent to me.

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards Lord Hatherton.

‘Our accounts generally this morning are more satisfactory. At Bristol there is much less embarrassment than we had reason to expect from a recent failure there. Sir John Byng sends me this morning good, I almost fear too good, accounts from the manufacturing districts in Yorkshire.

‘You shall have Mr. Forster’s very sensible letter back again to-morrow. He advises very liberal issues by the Bank of England. They have made immense issues lately. They issued not less than eight millions in the course of one week. It is, of course, of great importance to keep the exchanges at least not unfavourable.

‘I anticipate more inconvenience from the glut of every article of consumption, than I do from the recent failures. I fear that we have been working too fast, building too fast, importing too fast, and that when confidence in banking establishments shall have been restored, we shall still find that there will be much less demand for labour than there has been.

‘I heard of Lord Talbot’s notice to his tenantry some days since, and I confess it surprised me. The Duke of Buckingham issued a similar notice to his tenants near Bristol. It created great alarm. If Lords Lieutenant do these things, who can be surprised if those not in authority follow their example?

‘I know an instance in which a humble farmer lodged three hundred sovereigns with a banker at Guildford for the express purpose of assisting him by a proof of confidence. These sovereigns with many others were swept from the counter by a peer of the realm, who determined to provide for his own individual safety, and would have nothing but gold in return for his deposit.

‘I am so sanguine as not only to believe that we shall get through the present difficulties, but that ultimate good, after some severe suffering, will result from them. They must lead to a review of the system of banking in this country (England), and its establishment upon more rational principles.’

*Mr. Littleton to Mr. Peel.*

‘Teddlesley : Dec. 25, 1825.

‘The run on the banks seems to have ceased, and some of the bankers have again begun to issue their own notes. It is the general opinion of the bankers themselves, that in the course of a few days, if the runs are not recommenced, with due caution it may be safe for them to discount again. But for months to come this will be done very sparingly, and the derangement of all contracts, the want of employment, and the distress of the working classes is sure to be great. Already the men in the coal and iron trades are employed only half the days in the week at very reduced wages, and I fear that among manufacturers numerous stoppages will ensue.’

‘Dec. 31.—I shall for my own part be delighted to see some measures tending to give stability to provincial banks, and which may secure to them a permanent public confidence. The present system is all in favour of fictitious capitalists, while it is ruinous to men of real property. Country bankers of real capital have been so alarmed that I think you would find them less averse than they would have been formerly to submit to restrictions.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Littleton.*

‘(Private.)

‘London : Jan. 3, 1826.

‘Would not such a system of banking as that established in Scotland, the virtual effect of which is to throw the whole business into firms composed of a great number of partners, and of unquestionable solidity, to the exclusion of the speculator, give more real security to the public than any obligation upon country bankers to deposit Government securities?’

Among Mr. Peel’s confidential letters of this winter one is written by him to Dr. Lloyd at Oxford, with the view of stirring up the University to increase the amount of accommodation for



students. But his offer seems to have met with no encouragement.

*Mr. Peel to the Rev. Dr. Lloyd.*

(*Private and confidential.*)

' Whitehall : Jan. 24, 1826.

' Has Oxford sufficiently attended to what is doing at Cambridge with respect to the improvement and extension of the colleges ? If every college in Oxford is pressed for want of accommodation, and many more members would enter if they could be admitted, why not consider at least the expediency of making such additions as are required by the growing opulence and increasing numbers of the country ?

' It strikes me that this is a most important matter, both as it concerns the credit of the University and the general interests of the country. I apprehend that there could be little difficulty in raising any sum of money that could be required. The security for the interest would be the payment to be made by students for the occupation of the rooms to be built. So far as Parliament is concerned, I would most cheerfully perform that which would be nothing more than my duty, in taking charge of any Bill that might be necessary. Shall I take any step upon the subject, I mean such as that of mentioning it to the Chancellor of the University ? I should, of course, first wish to know what is the feeling in Oxford upon it. Can you mention it to the Vice-Chancellor and others in authority in a private way ?'

In December, Dr. Lloyd had sent Mr. Peel a sermon, inviting remarks. Of the answer a portion only is preserved.

*Mr. Peel to Dr. Lloyd.*

' " Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted." How does remission differ from a full assurance that the sins remitted will be wholly exempted from punishment in the world to come ?

' I believe sincere repentance to be an essential condition of God's mercy, that without it there must be inevitable

and severe punishment. But I can hardly believe that a deathbed repentance, though perfectly sincere, after a life of continued transgression, will necessarily entitle a sinner to the whole measure of God's mercy. Still less can I place entire confidence in the full authority of every minister of the Church of England, without exception, to say even to the truly repentant sinner, "By the authority of Jesus Christ committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

'This is very like a solemn judicial sentence, which I should think no *man* can in this world safely pronounce, and which can only be entirely and thoroughly relied on when pronounced by a Superior Being, to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no desires are hid.'

*The Rev. Dr. Lloyd to Mr. Peel.*

'Cheltenham: Dec. 23, 1825.

'Many thanks for your criticisms. I accept all the remarks and shall attend to them, but I must needs tell you that in regard to the great doctrine of Christianity you are little better than a heretic.'

The above letter is endorsed :

'*Mem.*—This was in answer to a letter from me of which part only appears among the letters returned to me by Lloyd's executor at his death. This contains the doubts which made Lloyd pronounce me little better than a heretic. 'R. P.'

Several letters indicate Mr. Peel's constant interest in the advancement of learning and the arts. It was in 1825 that he determined to provide at Harrow a gold medal to be annually adjudged to the best Latin composition in prose.

At the same time he advised the King to found two gold medals to be given annually by the Royal Society, indicating that the Treasury might provide for the pecuniary charge, an arrangement which the King at once approved.

*Mr. Peel to the King.*

‘Whitehall: Nov. 26, 1825.

‘Mr. Peel feels confident that your Majesty will receive with favour the suggestion which Mr. Peel takes the liberty of offering with respect to the Royal Society.

‘The only medal given by that society as an incitement to exertion on the part of men of science was founded by a private individual; and as the society itself is an ancient institution owing its origin to the Crown, it appears to Mr. Peel that it would be a very appropriate mark of royal favour, as it would no doubt be a powerful stimulus to science, if your Majesty were pleased to permit Mr. Peel to announce to the Royal Society that your Majesty had commanded two gold medals to be in future annually given as honorary rewards for the best papers sent in to the Council of the Royal Society on scientific subjects to be proposed by them.

‘Perhaps at this time, when so many new institutions of a literary nature unconnected with the Crown are daily starting into existence, it may be peculiarly useful to extend the influence of those establishments which have been derived from the Crown, and to give another of the many proofs of your Majesty’s warm solicitude for the interests of literature.

‘Mr. Peel has not mentioned this subject to anyone but Lord Liverpool, and to him only with the view of ascertaining whether the Treasury would provide for the pecuniary charge of the medals, which might be of the value of twenty guineas each. His Lordship most cordially acquiesced.’

The letter is endorsed: ‘Returned to me by Sir William Knighton on November 28, the King entirely approving, but desiring that the medals should be of the value of fifty guineas each.’

A letter from Mr. Peel’s former tutor at Harrow, who had fallen into some embarrassment by becoming security for a friend, evoked at once a delicate and generous response.

*Mr. Peel to the Rev. Mark Drury.*

‘(Private.)

‘Whitehall: Nov. 9, 1825.

‘I hear with very great concern that you are in pecuniary difficulties.

‘I do not collect from your letter the precise nature of them, but I much fear that if the only effectual mode of relief consists in the loan of money, I cannot be of much service to you, for, to tell you the truth, my own expenses have so far exceeded my income that I have been compelled within the last few weeks to borrow money for the purpose of meeting the deficiency.

‘If, however, you are in immediate difficulty, and if the sum of 200*l.* will be of the slightest assistance, I shall derive real satisfaction from your acceptance of it. I will desire my banker to pay that sum to your order, and he will of course remain entirely ignorant of the cause.’

Another letter of this year submits to the Prime Minister Mr. Peel’s moderate desires in behalf of members of his own family. It shows also how little work in Parliament Mr. Peel left to his Under Secretary.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘(Private and confidential.)

‘Whitehall: Dec. 24, 1825.

‘I have always avoided as far as possible troubling you with any personal objects. About myself personally, indeed, I never can have occasion to trouble you, but there are two points in which on account of others I feel a very warm interest, and which I mention to you with a full confidence that your inclination will be to gratify me when it is in your power.

‘In the first place, I am desirous that some official promotion should be given to Dawson (my brother-in-law) when a fair opportunity shall offer. He is capable of greater exertion than any which is now called for from him. He is most anxious to exert himself, but I find it very difficult

to transfer to anyone any portion of the business of my office which is to be transacted in the House of Commons. I prefer doing the whole of it myself. A vacancy in the office of Under Secretary of State would enable me to appoint my brother William to it.

‘In the second place, though indeed it is not a secondary consideration with me, I am most anxious for some preferment in the Church for my brother, the Rev. John Peel. I wish you would inquire as to his character and abilities as a preacher. He lived for nearly a year in the Isle of Thanet, and repeatedly did duty there. Dr. Lloyd was his tutor at Christ Church. He will have a very considerable fortune, and therefore mere provision in the Church is not the main object. But I have every confidence that he will greatly distinguish himself, and distinguish himself not merely as a preacher, but by the most unremitting attention to all those daily duties of a minister which are sometimes overlooked. I doubt whether he would not choose the severe labour of a populous parish rather than mere preferment unaccompanied by clerical duties. His character must be known to the Bishop of London.

‘Although he is my brother, I would not speak of him as I have done if I did not feel assured that if he lives he will do credit to the Church of England.’

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*<sup>3</sup>

‘Coombe Wood: Dec. 28, 1825.

‘It is scarcely necessary for me to say how anxious I must feel to find the means of accomplishing any objects which you may have at heart.

‘As to an arrangement by which Mr. Dawson may vacate the office of Under Secretary of State for your brother, I will explain to you, when we meet, the official engagements to which I am at present subject, and I shall be most happy to hear from you any suggestion.

‘With respect to your brother in the Church, I will cer-

<sup>3</sup> From Lord Liverpool’s manuscript papers.

tainly bear your wishes in my mind. You are aware that as to livings the Chancellor is the great leviathan, he has nine out of ten in the patronage of the Crown. I have no doubt, however, that if I remain in my present situation, I shall be enabled in the course of a short time to propose to you a suitable establishment for your brother.'

In the Act ultimately passed in 1825 by Mr. Goulburn, with the support of Canning and Plunket, for suppressing mischievous societies in Ireland, a clause had been introduced, as contemplated by Mr. Peel, exempting any society acting merely for purposes of public or private charity &c. Taking advantage of this, O'Connell had at once dissolved the first Catholic Association, forming in its place another for charitable and other purposes allowed by law. This was, of course, little more than changing the name, but Mr. Peel at once saw the difficulty of proclaiming the meetings of the new association as illegal, and wrote to warn the Irish Government against hasty proceedings.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Goulburn.*

Whitehall: Jan. 6, 1826.

'Surely it would be a very rash measure to pronounce beforehand a meeting to be illegal, which may be legal, but which I believe most certainly would be made legal, and would be holden as such, in the event of a previous proclamation.

'If ever a proclamation does issue, for God's sake let it be a shorter one than the one which Joy drew up. Let it refer generally to the statute. I tried at the Cabinet the other day to read his proclamation, but though there were only a few members present, without colds, I was coughed down before I had got half through the recital of the Act, long before I got to the thing proclaimed.'

In the mean time the Under Secretary of State for the Home Department, whose indiscretions were constantly laid to the charge of his chief, had been stirring up trouble in the North of Ireland.

*Mr. Dawson to Mr. Peel.*

‘Dublin: Jan. 14, 1826.

‘Of course you have seen the account of what took place at Derry. I most sincerely hope that you approve of the proceedings, for without your approbation I should not feel the least pleasure at all the plaudits and all the praise of the greatest multitudes. If I were to judge by the effect produced there, and by the reports I have received from England and other parts of Ireland, I should be induced to think that I had done some good to the cause, but I am not altogether satisfied with such expressions, and I would rather have your opinion that I had not done evil, than any other testimony whatever.

‘The feeling in the North of Ireland on the Catholic question is stronger than ever, and it appeared to me that the great majority of the Protestants only wanted an assurance of support to express their own feelings in the most unequivocal manner. I was therefore tempted, on the anniversary of the shutting of the gates of Derry, to give vent to my own sentiments, and to cheer up the Protestant spirit in as warm a manner as I could.

‘I was induced to take notice of O’Connell, Sheil, and others in the manner I did, from being asked in every company what effect their evidence produced; and as all public matters are very little understood in such distant districts, I thought it right to tell my constituents the truth.’

The evidence referred to was that given before a committee of the House of Commons, of which O’Connell writes: ‘Colonel Dawson, the brother-in-law of Peel, again assured me I had done away many prejudices of his.’ This effect does not appear to have lasted long. Mr. Peel wrote privately to Mr. Goulburn, disclaiming any connection with the Derry speech; and to Mr. Dawson himself a temperate but significant rebuke.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Dawson.*

(Undated.)

‘It is needless after the event to give any opinion upon the policy of the proceedings at Derry.

‘I certainly, in the present state of the Catholic question, should have thought forbearance a more prudent course so far as public interests are concerned.

‘I have never sought to control the opinions of others, but I have felt very anxious, on account of the official relation in which you stand to me, that when you express your opinions upon Irish affairs, you should make it clearly understood that you are speaking exclusively in your individual capacity.

‘When I read your speeches at Derry, I could have no doubt that the general impression must inevitably be that those speeches were made after previous communication and in concert with me. I believe one of the speeches concludes with an assurance that the persons whom you address will find champions in the highest quarters. Whether that expression refers to persons in the highest offices, or in the highest stations in the country, the declaration could not fail to be considered as authorised.

‘After what has passed between Mr. O’Connell and me, I perhaps might have hoped that out of regard to my private feelings a person nearly connected with me would either have abstained from an attack upon him, or at the least would have put it beyond all doubt that I was wholly ignorant of the intention to make it.

‘I have only now to make one request, that the explanation, which should have been given at first, may not be given now. That would carry with it the appearance of an apology made by me, or on my behalf, which would be yet more painful to my feelings than the impression that I was a party to the proceedings at Derry.’

About the same date Mr. Leslie Foster sent confidentially to Mr. Peel resolutions of the Roman Catholic prelates of Ireland, laying down the conditions on which children of their faith might



'under existing circumstances' be allowed to enter the same schools with Protestant children, 'for the purpose of literary instruction.' The terms were as follows: Where the Roman Catholic children are the majority, the teacher must be of that Church; where they are a minority, there must be a permanent Roman Catholic assistant; and in either case the teacher must be recommended by the Roman Catholic bishop, and removable by him. These teachers must not be trained or controlled by persons professing a different faith; for religious instruction the books must be approved by the prelates; and for common instruction no book must be used if objected to by the bishop on grounds of religion. Further, no school must be transferred out of Roman Catholic hands. The manifesto ends: 'Responsible as we are to God for the souls of our flocks, we shall in our respective dioceses withhold our concurrence and support from any system of education which will not fully accord with these principles.'

These conditions Mr. Foster regarded as impracticable, but his colleagues on the Education Commission were making a further attempt to come to terms. His own view was that a rupture was inevitable, in which case he thought the policy of the Government should be to uphold and extend the existing schools. 'If the priests,' he writes, 'can but obtain the public money, they will carry the people with them, and educate them in ignorance, bigotry, and hatred of us all.' Mr. Peel replies:

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Leslie Foster.*

(*Private.*)

Whitehall: Feb. 16, 1826.

'I entirely concur with you in opinion, first, that we ought not to abandon or impair our existing means of instructing the people, until we are quite sure that some better means can be devised; and secondly, that Parliament ought not to grant funds to the Roman Catholic prelate or priesthood, for the separate education of Roman Catholics. If on fair terms they will accept a common education, well and good. If they will not, they have no right to expect, nor would it in my opinion be fair to give them, public aid for the instruction of Roman Catholic children apart from Protestants. By giving it we should be establishing by legislative authority a more marked line of distinction

between Protestant and Catholic than even exists at present.'

During the winter the Duke of Wellington had gone to Russia on a special mission, and letters to him from Mr. Peel report the proceedings of the Ministry in his absence. Money being still scarce, the principles of currency and banking were much discussed, bimetallism included. But the most burning question was that of issuing freely Exchequer bills to relieve commercial distress. Against recourse to so dangerous a remedy, Peel and Canning both stood firm, prepared to retire from office rather than give way, and Peel dissuaded the Prime Minister from resigning. Scotland meanwhile, led by Sir Walter Scott, who had suffered severely from the banking crisis, did battle to retain her one-pound notes.

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

Feb. 10, 1826.

'We had a Cabinet yesterday, to consider of the language which should be held to-night in the House of Commons, particularly with respect to the discontinuance of small note circulation in Scotland and Ireland. We resolved that the best course would be to declare an opinion that the general principle of the measure applied to England must at an early period be applied to every part of the United Kingdom, but that we had not sufficient information as to the state of banking and currency in Scotland and Ireland to be able at present to enter into details.

'We hear of a resolute opposition on the part of the country bankers to the proposed plan for throwing open the banking trade at a certain distance from London. Baring has been talking of moving as an amendment to Robinson's motion of to-night, that there should be a committee of general inquiry into the state of the circulation and commercial distress. He will press his views as to making silver as well as gold a legal tender. I am satisfied that this proposition, subject to some modification, should not be rejected, at least that it should be most maturely considered.'

*The Duke of Wellington to Mr. Peel.*

‘Berlin : Feb. 18, 1826.

‘In respect to the currency, my opinion is that we must persevere in our measure in respect to England, which I am certain is right, but we must proceed very slowly. I think I should extend it to Ireland, and eventually to Scotland, but in neither at the same time as in England, nor previous to a deliberate inquiry. I should doubt the expediency of making silver as well as gold our standard. Wherever silver and gold are current at the same time in the same country, as at Paris for instance, there is an agio upon gold, which varies, and therefore cannot depend solely upon the greater convenience of gold than of silver. In England, the agio would vary in proportion as the sources of one or other of these metals are productive, not only positively, but relatively to each other.

‘We must expect that the result of all these mining speculations will be to augment the produce of silver, and the difference of the value of that metal in relation will increase daily ; and if we made silver a part of our currency otherwise than it is, we should even have a gold and a silver price in our market.

‘The truth is that what is going on in the world will make silver useless as a measure of value, and I am afraid that for this evil there is no practical remedy.’

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

‘Whitehall : March 3, 1826.

‘The two principal events since I last wrote to you, are the discussion on the silk trade, and that on the issue of Exchequer bills for the relief of commercial distress.

‘On the first, which from the course the debate took involved the question of Free Trade generally, Huskisson made a very powerful and successful speech. I believe it converted many who meant to vote against the Government, and when we came to the division we had an immense majority, there

not being more than forty against us. Little Williams, the lawyer, took quite a new line on this occasion, attacked Huskisson as a theorist, and condemned his experiments in trade as unsafe and injurious to the home manufactures. Canning took up Huskisson's defence very warmly, was bitterly severe on Williams, and covered him with ridicule.

'We have been placed in a very unpleasant predicament on the other question, the issue of Exchequer bills. The feeling of the City, of many of our friends, of some of the Opposition, was decidedly in favour of it, to relieve the merchants and manufacturers. It was said that the same measure had been tried and succeeded in 1793 and 1811. Our friends whispered about that we were acting quite in a different manner from that in which Mr. Pitt did act, and would now have acted, had he been alive.

'We felt satisfied that the measure was a dangerous one, and ought to be resisted.'

After giving reasons in detail, Mr. Peel continues :

'We found that the Bank had the power to lend money on deposit of goods. As our issue of Exchequer bills would have been useless unless the Bank cashed them, as therefore the intervention of the Bank was in any event absolutely necessary, and as its intervention would be chiefly useful by the effect which it would have in increasing the circulating medium, we advised the Bank to take the whole affair into their own hands, and at once to issue their notes on the security of goods instead of issuing them on Exchequer bills, such bills being themselves issued on that security. They reluctantly consented, and rescued us from a very embarrassing predicament.

'A few days previously, Canning declared in the House that the Government had made up their mind not to issue the Exchequer bills, and he added that if the House resolved upon the issue, they must find other instruments than the present Ministers to carry their views into effect.

‘ This declaration certainly caused great surprise among our friends. At the time when it was made, there seemed little chance that the Bank would give way. If they had not consented to lend money on the deposit of goods, I firmly believe that a motion which Wilson, the member for the City of London, would have made would have been carried. We must in that case have acted on Canning’s declaration and retired from office.

‘ Canning was mainly induced, I apprehend, to make that declaration by the language held by Lord Liverpool, who said that he not only felt the issue of Exchequer bills by his Government to be wrong, but he was personally pledged against such a measure, and observed in conversation that the best mode of solving the difficulty was for him [Lord Liverpool] to retire from office, the rest of the members of the Government retaining their offices.

‘ He said this to me in the presence of two other persons, and seemed seriously to think of resigning. I went to him when he was alone, told him I thought him very wrong in using such language, that if he resigned when the country was in a financial difficulty—he, the Minister who presided over the finances of the country—that he would lose all the credit he had gained by long and successful service, that the country would right itself in two or three months, that the man who might succeed to him would get all the credit, and he personally all the blame.

‘ I added also that what he proposed to do, namely to retire singly, should not take place, that I should feel it dishonourable to allow one member of the Government, and that member the head of it, to make himself a sacrifice, and if he retired, though I should feel deeply the necessity of throwing up my share of the Government at a moment of danger, yet I could not but consider that his retirement, under such circumstances, would be a dissolution of the Government. However, from all these difficulties we have been for the present relieved by the concession made by the Bank.

‘ I think I have now written enough to prove to you that

the public interest requires that you should not delay your return a single day beyond absolute necessity.

‘I do not suppose that we shall have much trouble in the House before Easter. I think the prevailing feeling among our friends still is that we ought to have issued the Exchequer bills. My firm opinion is that we were right in refusing, and that had we consented we should have defeated our other measures, and not impossibly have had to answer for another Bank restriction.

‘There is a great flame in Scotland, violent opposition to the withdrawal of small notes at any period, Walter Scott encouraging the opposition by every appeal to national pride and national feeling.’

Distress being severe in the spring of this year in the manufacturing districts, Mr. Peel found time to urge on the Treasury a grant in aid of the suffering silk-weavers of Spitalfields, and was active also in promoting a private subscription, in which he was liberally supported by his father.

*Sir Robert Peel to Mr. Peel.*

‘Drayton : April 30, 1826.

‘Your letter of yesterday is before me. I am glad to learn there is likely to be a meeting in the City to mitigate the distress of suffering commercial districts. I fear, if the contributions are to be confined to London, no exertions that can be made will have the desired effect. London should certainly originate, and sanction with its example the work of benevolence, but I hope you will recommend the formation of committees in distinguished commercial places, where relief is wanted, and let them be the organs through which the contributions may pass.

‘Though business is carried on in this neighbourhood to a small extent, the works are only half employed, and if I had not advanced on property not in use more than twelve thousand pounds, serious mischief would have ensued. If I had not given to manufacturing families, on articles pur-

chased by them of the first necessity, ten per cent. they could not subsist on their scanty wages.

‘I wish you to subscribe for me equal to anyone in my situation, regardless of what I have done.’

In March, Mr. Peel brought forward the important measures which he had been preparing for the reform and consolidation of the criminal law as regards theft, and to improve the administration of the law. His masterly speech (in which he acknowledged amply his obligations to his Under Secretary Mr. Hobhouse, to his draftsman Mr. Gregson, to the Lord Chief Justice, to five other judges, and to members of the Bar, for assistance and suggestions) received at once the warm approval of the House and of the country, and some of the chief legal authorities to whom he sent it were profuse in congratulations.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Hobhouse.*

‘Whitehall Gardens: March 23, 1826.

‘I cannot send you this without assuring you that I feel that the chief merit of the works to which it refers belongs to you.’

*Chief Justice Abbott to Mr. Peel.*

‘Hendon: March 28, 1826.

‘If anything were wanted to add distinction to a name already honoured for talents and integrity, the pains you have taken and the discretion you have shown on the subject of your speech cannot fail to confer it. I heartily wish you length of days to enjoy your reputation, being perfectly assured that increase of years will be accompanied by increase of honour.’

*Lord President Hope to Mr. Peel.*

‘Granton, Edinburgh: April 4, 1826.

‘You have really done a most important service to the country, and laid a fair foundation of solid fame and credit to yourself. I hope you will extend your labours to

simplifying other branches of the criminal law which may equally require the pruning hook.'

*Lord Chancellor Manners to Mr. Peel.*

'Dublin: April 4, 1826.

'I heartily congratulate you on the credit you have obtained and deserved for the cautious and circumspect manner in which you are conducting so complicated and laborious a work. You have made the office of Secretary for the Home Department of infinitely more consequence than it has ever been in the hands of any of your predecessors. The well managing of our foreign affairs and interests may be more striking and brilliant, it is by no means more substantial or more important. I am not flattering you, but merely speaking the truth and doing you justice.'

This subject called forth characteristic letters from a well-known reformer, the witty Canon of St. Paul's.

*Rev. Sydney Smith to Mr. Peel.*

'Foston, York: March 13, 1826.

'Whether you will pardon me or not, I must at all hazards state the satisfaction your speech has given to me and the real admiration it has excited. In this way it is that a nation starts up into great advantages and improvement, when a man gets into high situations who is well fitted for them. You have discovered true and lawful ambition among the many counterfeits which glitter in the casket. By such a choice you will derive great happiness and fame, and the country endless good.

'I hope that you will consider the effects of Botany Bay as a punishment. A sentence of transportation to Botany Bay translated into common sense is this: "Because you have committed this offence, the sentence of the Court is that you shall no longer be burdened with the support of your wife and family. You shall be immediately re-



moved from a very bad climate and a country overburdened with people to one of the finest regions of the earth, where the demand for human labour is every hour increasing, and where it is highly probable you may ultimately regain your character and improve your future. The Court have been induced to pass this sentence upon you in consequence of the many aggravating circumstances of your case, and they hope your fate will be a warning to others.”

*Mr. Peel to Rev. Sydney Smith.*

‘ Whitehall: March 24, 1826.

‘ We are at this moment occupied in devising the means of giving to transportation some degree of salutary terror as a punishment. Two or three years since I procured a power from the Legislature to employ convicts in hard labour in any of the colonies, and I have now three or four hundred men at work in the Bermudas.

‘ I admit the inefficiency of transportation to Botany Bay, but the whole subject of what is called secondary punishment is full of difficulty; a difficulty arising mainly, I regret to add, from the vast harvest of transportable crime that is reaped at every assize.

‘ I can hardly devise anything as secondary punishment in addition to what we have at present. We have the convict ships, which at this moment hold four or five thousand convicts employed in public works. There is a limit to this, for without regular employment found for the convicts, it is worse even than transportation.

‘ Solitary imprisonment sounds well in theory, but it has in a peculiar degree the evil that is common to all punishment, it varies in its severity according to the disposition of the culprit. It is a punishment which requires too delicate a hand in the enforcement of it to be generally available. To some intellects its consequences are indifferent, to others they are fatal.

‘ Public exposure by labour on the highways, with badges of disgrace, and chains, and all the necessary precautions

against escape, would revolt, and very naturally I think, public opinion in this country. It is the punishment adopted in some countries, but we could not bear it here.

‘As for long terms of imprisonment without hard labour, we have them at present, for we have the Penitentiary with room for 800 penitents. When they lived well, their lot in the winter season was thought by people outside to be rather an enviable one. We reduced their food, and from the combined effect of low but ample diet, and the depression of spirits which is the frequent attendant on the dull unvarying punishment of imprisonment for years, there arose a malignant and contagious disorder which at the time emptied the prison, either through the death or removal of its inmates.

‘The present occupants are therefore again living too comfortably, I fear, for penance.

‘The real truth is the number of convicts is too overwhelming for the means of proper and effectual punishment. I despair of any remedy but that which I wish I could hope for—a great reduction in the amount of crime.’

*Rev. Sydney Smith to Mr. Peel.*

‘(Private.)

‘Foston, York: March 27, 1826.

‘If, unfortunately for mankind, the reins of internal government were placed in my hands, I suspect I should put an end to transportation, hulks, and penitentiary, and use no other secondary punishment than the treadmill, varying in all degrees from a day to a life. Prisoners for fourteen years and under should remain in the House of Correction of the county; the others I would make Government prisoners, but of this I doubt.

‘This punishment would be economical, certain, well administered, little liable to abuse, capable of infinite division, a perpetual example before the eyes of those who want it, affecting the imagination only with horror and disgust, and affording great ease to the Government. I should feel quite at ease respecting the employment of my prisoners. The wheel should go round whether it ground anything or

nothing. I suspect that to grind nothing would be more terrible to the grinder, and cheaper to the master.

‘I will follow out these notions in the “Edinburgh Review,” in the hope you may cast your eye upon them. I quite agree with all you say of solitary imprisonment and public expense.

‘My great hope of the diminution of crime is in the gradual alteration of those laws which encourage crime, and in the more rapid, certain, and wise dispensation of punishments which avenge it; and I judge from what you say and do, that you entertain the same hope.’

Another correspondent on this and kindred subjects was an old and intimate college friend, now a country rector.

*Rev. J. T. James to Mr. Peel.*

‘Flitton Vicarage: Feb. 17, 1826.

‘I cannot tell you with what pleasure I read your speech on the small note currency; and recurring to the former speech when the great question was settled, it is not possible to check some little feelings of triumph: the expression is not improper even in this distressed season, for what would have happened now had nothing been done then?’

‘I am most delighted, however, to see that you have announced your intention to examine the subject of agricultural wages, rates &c., for we country people think you the only person who can turn a theory to good practical use. Pray do allow me, therefore, to send you a statement of certain circumstances relative to this subject in my parish.’

*Mr. Peel to Rev. J. T. James.*

‘Whitehall: March 4, 1826.

‘Busy as I am, I must not any longer postpone my best thanks for your letter and the information respecting the state of your parish with reference to agricultural labour and its remuneration. There appears to me something

unsound in that state of things in which a young man in full possession of health and strength, and willing to labour, can hardly maintain himself, and cannot maintain a very small family by the produce of his labour. One of the main causes of this seems to me sufficiently pointed out by the examples which your letter contains. There is evidently resulting, if not from the letter of the law, at least from its operation, a restriction on the free application of that which is a poor man's capital, his labour.

'It would be as absurd to enact, if we were legislating *à priori* (if I may so say), that the manual strength which a parish might happen to contain should be limited to that parish, as that the potatoes grown in it should be consumed in it. But really this is pretty nearly the practical effect produced in many parishes by the law of settlement and other laws connected with the administration of the poor laws.

'I have read your remarks on the "Theological Review," I mean those contained in the two additional leaves to your "Semi-Sceptic." The Review itself I have not seen, but I am curious to see it, and have sent for it. I have a great taste for discussions on Materialism. I believe there is no subject in which there is so much misapprehension of the meaning intended to be expressed by the terms made use of. Witness the comments on Locke by the Reviewer whom you have corrected.'

*Rev. J. T. James to Mr. Peel.*

'Flitton, Silsoe, Beds : March 29, 1826.

'I never read anything with more pleasure than your speech on the amendment of the criminal law, as reported in the papers; you may conceive, then, with what delight I received the printed copy which you were kind enough to send me. The subject will never be called "barren and uninviting" again, you have ornamented it in your happiest manner; but I am aware at the same time that the real interest which is excited arises chiefly from the way in which you have grasped the subject.

‘ In this part of the country, where we are as sluggish as agriculturists need to be, we feel most severely the truth of the remarks which you make as to the efficiency of a regular police establishment. Perhaps if it were allowed by the law to apply the county rate to such a purpose, a county police would be set up in many parts of England that would not be viewed with jealousy.’

The attention of the Home Office was directed also to strengthening the police in provincial towns.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Hobhouse.*

‘ July 9, 1826.

‘ I should not be surprised if it shall become necessary to organise some kind of local force in the manufacturing districts for the protection of property—something less cumbrous and expensive than yeomanry, but of a more permanent and efficient character than special constables.

‘ All the respectable householders must feel a strong interest in preventing the destruction of private property by tumultuous mobs. The present object of such mobs would be to attack private property, and the owners must co-operate with the Government, I mean by actual personal service. Three hundred men, acting in concert, well armed, and determined to resist to the utmost any attack on property, would do much good in such places as Burnley or Blackburn.’

## CHAPTER XII.

1826-1827.

General Election in England and Ireland—Waterford—Louth—Political Activity of Catholic Priests—Religious Animosities—Protestant Apprehensions—Orange Societies dissolved—The Catholic Association undisturbed—Project for a Metropolitan Police Force—Death of the Duke of York—The Duke of Wellington Commander-in-Chief—Lloyd Bishop of Oxford—Renewal of an early Friendship.

IN June 1826 the Parliament of 1820, having sat longer than any Parliament of the United Kingdom before or since, was of necessity dissolved. In the general election one chief issue was the Catholic question. In England and in Scotland Protestant zeal helped the Tories. The Whigs sustained defeat in the persons of Brougham and Lord John Russell, the Radicals lost Cobbett and Hunt. Sir Robert Peel brought into Parliament a third son, passing over one who was disqualified by taking the Catholic side.

*Sir Robert Peel to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Drayton: May 3, 1826.

‘ I am anxious to see your brother Jonathan in Parliament, if it can be effected at an expense not exceeding 1,500*l.* I should object to some situations as not affording employment enough for a young man wishing to have his time occupied. Norwich is a manufacturing town of considerable consequence, and the business to be done requires constant attendance. As we wish to avoid being engaged in a contested election, and Norwich being notorious in favour of one, should Jonathan feel himself called to give up all prospect of being one of its members, could you afford him hopes of getting a seat recommended by Government ?

‘If the invitation of voters be of that respectable kind that will almost secure him a seat, it is to be hoped that your brother will, by attention to his duties, make its continuance easy to him afterwards.

‘Edmund has seen Jonathan, and wishes him success. He is still of opinion that the Catholics ought to succeed in their object, which opinion would render him an improper candidate for the Tory interest of Norwich.’

The Home Secretary himself took an active part in promoting his brother’s return.

*Mr. Thomas Amyot to Mr. Peel.*

‘June 23, 1826.

‘I have left your brother at Norwich in excellent spirits. I accompanied him to the theatre, where he was loudly welcomed. It is evident that the great popular favour he had personally acquired has been strengthened and confirmed by the well-timed compliment you have paid to his constituents. I cannot deny myself the gratification of noticing the enthusiastic feeling excited by your visit, which is really regarded as an event in the history of Norwich guilds.’

Letters exchanged between Mr. Peel and Mr. Canning throw a curious light on the politics of a well-known Radical.

*Mr. Canning to Mr. Peel.*

‘(Most secret.)

‘Foreign Office: Dec. 28, 1826.

‘You will have heard perhaps that I caused inquiry to be made at your office respecting a Frenchman of the name of Sievrac, now resident at Kensington. My reason for wishing to learn what is known of him is, that I have received information from a source which I have often found correct, that this Sievrac is an intermediary between either the French Government or the French Ambassador and our friend Cobbett, and the channel of certain metallic com-

munications with the said Cobbett, which have kindled his recent zeal for Catholicism and Spain. Hobhouse says that you have some hold on the Frenchman, for neglect of the provisions of the Alien Bill. If so, pray let him be vexed and worried a little, that we may see what part Polignac—*quo non Jesuitior alter*—will take in his behalf.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Canning.*

‘(Most private.)

‘Dec. 30, 1826.

‘I have given directions in conformity with your suggestion respecting Sievrac. A communication has been indeed already made to him, summoning him to explain certain omissions with regard to the Alien Act.’

From Scotland, Lord Melville wrote that Sir John Sinclair, holding office during pleasure as Cashier of Excise, had been using every exertion to have his son, ‘a sort of Liberal Radical,’ elected for Caithness-shire, whereby under an Act of George III. he had forfeited his office. Mr. Peel generously replied :

‘Considering that Sir John Sinclair’s offence against the law arose from mere inadvertence, and that his offence against the Government, in opposing Lord Caithness’s son, is mitigated by the circumstance that the other candidate for the county is his own son, I think it would be a hard measure to make Sir John forfeit his office.’

Mr. Peel’s own re-election for the University was announced to him by the well-known Master of Balliol (Jenkyns), then Vice-Chancellor, ‘with sentiments of unmixed respect and esteem.’ At the same time he expresses, on the part of the University, ‘the entire confidence with which, from a recollection of the past, we commit our interests to your hands.’

Little foreseeing the change of policy which within three years was to sever the connection, Mr. Peel replied :

‘This renewed sanction of the course which I have pursued in public life is to me an ample reward for all its labour and anxiety. It is at the same time a strong incentive to the steady maintenance of those principles the avowal of which recommended me at an early period of my political career to the favour and confidence of the University.’

Far less smooth was the course of events in Ireland. Already in the spring O’Connell himself had begun to be alarmed by the



religious passions he had fanned into a flame, and had written to warn the Attorney-General of the need for more soldiers to keep the peace.

*Mr. O'Connell to Mr. Plunket.*

‘ March 7, 1826.

‘ I feel it a duty to inform you that the accounts from the country by those who are well acquainted with the people are terrific. The Ribbon connection has assumed a new form. It has its origin in the North. The Orangemen of Cavan and Fermanagh have armed themselves with daggers, or—what is nearly as bad—the lower orders of Catholics have been made to believe that they are so armed, and in consequence the Ribbonmen are getting similar arms. . . . I have no remedy to suggest save the increase of the King's troops in Ireland. I have done my duty in communicating these facts to you. Those who gave me this information cannot be deceived, and are themselves greatly horrified.’

Also at the elections of 1826 was first divulged the secret of political power, that with a popular franchise, such as Ireland then possessed, county members could be chosen otherwise than by the will of the landed gentry. In Waterford the Protestant family of Beresfords had been long all-powerful. Their candidate was Lord George Beresford. The Devonshire family, though friendly to the Catholic claims, refused to oppose him. Yet through the influence of O'Connell and the priests he found himself so hopelessly deserted, even by the tenants of his brother Lord Waterford, that he did not go to the poll. In Louth one of Mr. Peel's most intimate friends was beaten heavily by the popular candidate, and all but lost his seat by doings which he sets forth in detail.

*Mr. Leslie Foster to Mr. Peel.*

‘ (Private.)

‘ July 8, 1826.

‘ You will hear of Waterford election from others. You may wish to know something of the Louth election from me. The Catholics selected the two as the arenas for trying their full force and wreaking their bitterest vengeance.

‘I entered upon the contest with upwards of five-sixths of the votes promised to me, and my opponent was the person in the whole county the most unacceptable to the gentry, who were unanimous in support of me, except the few Catholic proprietors who supported him only because he was opposed to me.

‘The scene opened by resolutions from the Catholic Association, and by a circular from old Curteis to all his priests; but who set Curteis in activity, is what I would rather tell you than write.

‘A systematic organisation was immediately developed. A lay committee was formed in every parish to levy forced subscriptions, to collect the people, harangue them, and make them drunk. The priests preached in all their chapels the most violent sermons, and visited every Catholic who had a vote. The eternal salvation of the voter being at stake, was distinctly the proposition insisted on with the tenantry. This was put to them in every variety of form, and believed by them more firmly than the Gospel. I was stated to be the enemy of the Church—the enemy of Christ. It was a choice between the distress warrant and the Cross, Sheil’s own expression on the occasion. The tenantry, if ruined, were to be blessed martyrs, while the legs were to burn eternally in hell fire which should carry any voter to the poll for me. Even purgatory was not to save him.

‘A personal fury almost demoniacal was thus raised against me, and soon became directed against all my supporters. Very many Protestants were forced to vote against me by the threats of assassination or having their houses burnt. My voters were waylaid by large mobs along every line of road, and severely beaten, not merely in coming but in returning. Lord Oriel’s tenantry, who most of them proved steady, were attacked ten miles distant from the county town by a mob of above a thousand persons collected for the purpose, and the continued escort of military became at last indispensable.

‘When the poll commenced, all the priests of the county were collected and distributed through the different booths,

where they stood with glaring eyes directly opposite to the voters of their respective flocks as they were severally brought up. In the county town the studied violence and intimidation were such that it was only by locking up my voters in inclosed yards that their lives were preserved.

‘The result of all these proceedings was a very general defection of the tenants from their landlords as to their first votes, and one almost universal as to their second. Dawson’s legitimate force was less than 120 votes ; he polled 862, and all the difference proceeded from piracy. Lord Roden’s interest was about 250 votes, he gave it to me heartily. Out of it I obtained about ten, and Dawson all the rest. There are two cousins of mine, Mr. Fosters, each of whom has about 3,000*l.* a year in this county. From one of their estates I obtained about six votes, and from the other literally but one.

‘At the close of the election the Catholics threw in their votes to the other Protestant candidate merely to get me out, but they were a little too late in the manœuvre, and matters ended—Dawson 862, Foster 552, Fortescue 547.

‘Now that all is over I hardly know what is to be the consequence. The landlords are exasperated to the utmost, the priests swaggering in their triumph, the tenantry sullen and insolent. Men who a month ago were all civility and submission now hardly suppress their curses when a gentleman passes by. The text of every village orator is, “Boys, you have put down three Lords. Stick to your priests, and you will carry all before you.”

‘Many persons suppose that Catholic Emancipation would abate the influence of the priests. My impressions to the contrary are only confirmed by what I have seen. If any candidate after the carrying of the measure should resist their notions of education, or their being provided with chapels or glebe houses, or even belong to a Bible Society, or resist any of their projects of aggrandisement, I am persuaded he would equally be denounced as an enemy of the Church, and that all the same consequences would ensue.

‘The landlords will no doubt be driven to refuse freehold leases to Roman Catholics, and to encourage by all artificial means a Protestant population. But this is a distant prospect, and in the mean time the power of these priests is become so tremendous, and their fury in the exercise of it so great, that I begin to fear a crisis of some kind or other is not far distant.’

Similar opinions from another strong Protestant friend elicited comments from Mr. Peel.

*Sir George Hill to Mr. Peel.*

‘Derry: July 6, 1826.

‘I know not what to anticipate from the success of the Pope, and his parliament, and priesthood. Universal indignation prevails here. O’Connell has announced his fixed resolve to direct all their energies at the next election to Tyrone, Donegal, and Derry. George Dawson will be his chief mark.

‘We have endeavoured to restrain the Protestants from procession on the twelfth of this month, but I am not sanguine of general obedience to our counsel. The continued and permitted existence of the Popish Parliament has not fulfilled Plunket’s opinion, that they would disgrace themselves even with their own persuasion, and sink into contempt. The present state of things cannot be endured. The Romans are united as one man, and common safety will justify counter-association against the chance or dread of commotion.’

*Mr. Peel to the Right Hon. Sir George Hill.*

‘(Private.)

‘Whitehall: July 16, 1826.

‘Come what may, I think you are quite right in earnestly recommending the forbearance from processions. I have never had but one opinion, that it is true policy for the Protestant minority in Ireland to forbear, above all to

refrain from demonstrations which may not be, which are not intended to be insulting, but which, while man is man, must be provoking and annoying to those the defeat of whose forefathers they commemorate.

‘A darker cloud than ever seems to me to impend over Ireland, that is, if one of the remaining bonds of society, the friendly connection between landlord and tenant, is dissolved. But I am not so sure as some are that the priests have triumphed over the landlords. They have carried the tenantry in some counties by a *coup de main*. I doubt whether there may not be a powerful reaction, whether the sense of shame and the disfavour of the landlord (even though not shown by a rigid exaction of legal rights) may not ultimately tell against the priests. Six or seven years is a long interval of sobriety after the drunkenness of the election. It is, however, a difficult matter to speculate upon.

‘Our accounts from the North of the state and prospects of trade are very gloomy. My present correspondence reminds me of Ireland.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Leslie Foster, M.P.*

‘(Most private.)

‘Whitehall: July 16, 1826.

‘The accounts of the Louth election have, during its progress, been very interesting to me, and I am very much indebted to you for your general account of these extraordinary proceedings and their result.

‘Is it quite certain that the late victory of the priests in some counties of Ireland will permanently add to their influence? May there not be a reaction, a growing feeling that the priest has been playing his own game at the expense of the tenant, and has been unjust both to him and the landlord?’

‘It is folly to predict any particular event in politics. All that I say is that I am not at all clear that the late triumph of the priesthood will be a lasting one, or will add to their permanent influence.

‘The old question still remains: Are these things the mere effect of artificial distinctions and disqualifying laws, or is there a deeper cause for them in the spirit of popery, in a state of society in which the land belongs to one religion, and the physical strength to another, and in a bigoted priesthood so independent of all authority that it would be almost better they should be dependent on the Pope?’

‘It would be a greater relief to my mind than I can hope to enjoy, to be persuaded that the removal of the present disqualifications will be a cure for the present evils, and at the same time leave Ireland under a Protestant Government.’

In a letter to the Lord Lieutenant, Mr. Peel remarks upon the contrast between the English and the Irish elections, and on the good service done by the Irish constabulary in restraining forces tending to extreme disorder.

*Mr. Peel to the Marquis of Wellesley.*

‘(Private.)’

‘Whitehall: July 1, 1826.’

‘I regret to perceive by the daily reports which you have been good enough to forward to me, that the general election has given rise to so much violence in some parts of Ireland.’

‘It is remarkable that in this country there never was a general election less characterised by serious political differences than the present, by differences at least having any reference to the general policy of the Government. But I apprehend there never was more of vehement contest and animosity springing from local causes and personal preferences and hostilities. Military assistance in aid of the civil power has frequently been resorted to.’

‘It seems quite clear that Ireland is indebted to the constabulary force for the exemption of many parts of the country from dreadful disorder.’

Foreign as well as home affairs at this time began to assume a somewhat threatening aspect.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Goulburn.*

‘Whitehall: July 22, 1826.

‘We had our first Cabinet on Tuesday. There is ample matter for deliberation on affairs foreign and domestic.

‘Our relations with the United States of America are not very comfortable. There is more than one pretty good ground for dispute, if either party is anxious for a quarrel. The boundary on the North-East frontier has yet to be adjusted, America claims a part of New Brunswick, she advances also a preposterous claim to the free navigation of the St. Lawrence. Her pretensions on the North-West coast are not less extravagant. The whole state of the commercial intercourse between the United States and the West Indies is also in a very unsatisfactory position.

‘I still hope that some satisfactory adjustment of our differences may be made; but looking at the real cause of difference, the bitter jealousy which the United States entertain of this country—justly considering her the only formidable rival on the seas—and seeing the undisguised enmity of the present President [Adams], it is impossible not to feel some anxiety.

‘The Emperor of Brazil has perplexed and astonished all the European Courts by divesting himself of the sovereignty of Portugal, devolving it upon his daughter on condition of her marrying Don Miguel, her uncle, and of the acceptance by Portugal of a constitutional charter. This has produced a great sensation at Madrid, the King and Government of that unhappy country feeling very uneasy at the approach of anything in the shape of a constitution even to a neighbouring country.

‘At home the prospects are gloomy enough. The great cause of apprehension is not in the disaffection, but in the real distress, of the manufacturing districts. There is as much forbearance as it is possible to expect from so much suffering.’

On July 25 Mr. Goulburn reports on the state of Ireland—diminution of crime, but commercial distress, as in England; in Dublin, want of employment, strikes, filth, and fever; in the country, a fine wheat crop, but total failure of flax, and partial failure of oats and barley. He continues:

*Mr. Goulburn to Mr. Peel.*

‘Dublin Castle: July 25, 1826.

‘The great evil is the state of party feeling. Never were Roman Catholic and Protestant so decidedly opposed, never did the former act with so general a concert, or place themselves so completely under the command of the priesthood, and never did the priests assume to themselves such authority, and exercise their power so openly in a manner the most extraordinary and alarming.

‘Much, no doubt, of this authority and of the display of it arises from the result of three or four of the late elections, in which was completely developed what I have always maintained, the superiority of the power of a Roman Catholic priesthood over every other in the State. They are naturally elated with their success. As Irishmen they love to display their power, and they omit no opportunity of taunting their adversaries. The Protestants, on the other hand, charge all the insults they receive to the partiality of the Government for their opponents. And I cannot deny that the conduct of the Government has a character of partiality and unfairness. We are obliged to prevent an Orange procession, because we believe it may tend to riot or to exasperation; we cannot interfere with the Catholic Association, because there is doubt as to the possibility of doing so with effect; and it is impossible so to explain this as to satisfy any Protestant that he is not abandoned and ill-used. The Protestant proceedings are of a nature to render them accessible to the law. They hoist flags, they carry swords, they go in procession to church decorated with ribbons. The Catholics, on the other hand, annoy their Protestant neighbours in a more



effectual but less tangible manner. The priest directs them at chapel to abstain from trading with their enemies, and there are many other modes in which the party numerically strongest can easily annoy, irritate and injure their opponents without rendering themselves liable to legal interference.

‘The idea of partiality begets exasperation as against the Government and against the Roman Catholic, and it requires great attention to prevent a contest. I should not be surprised to hear of the two bodies coming into conflict.

‘I do not, however, think it is O’Connell’s game to bring it to this. I apprehend his policy to be to keep up irritation and hostility to the highest possible pitch short of actual violence, and to hope by intimidation to carry everything he looks for. He is complete master of the Roman Catholic clergy, the clergy are complete masters of the people, and upon him and them it depends whether the country shall or shall not be quiet during the winter. }

‘This is at least my opinion of our situation here, one you will admit to be not by any means consolatory, after nearly five years’ attempt to reduce the violence of party feelings, and to secure to the Roman Catholic the fullest enjoyment of every privilege of which he can by law partake.’

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

‘July 31, 1826.

‘When you have read the inclosed letter from Goulburn pray return it to me. Depend upon it that party animosities never were higher in Ireland than they are at this moment, in spite of conciliation.’

*The Duke of Wellington to Mr. Peel.*

‘Royal Lodge, Windsor: Aug. 1, 1826.

‘Goulburn’s letter gives but a melancholy account of the state of affairs in Ireland. Ever since the appointment

of the Catholic Association, I have been of opinion that the question of tranquillity or disturbance, war or peace, depends upon a few leaders in that body, and possibly upon O'Connell alone, by the medium of the priests.

'We are in a curious state in all our relations, and it appears to me scarcely possible that we should get out of all our difficulties without a crisis.'

During the autumn the Chief Secretary continued to send in reports of the domineering conduct of the priests, which Mr. Peel endeavoured in some cases to verify.

*Mr. Goulburn to Mr. Peel.*

'Sept. 13, 1826.

'It is undeniable that the priests exercise on all matters a dominion perfectly uncontrolled and uncontrollable. In many parts of the country their sermons are purely political, and the altars in the several chapels are the rostra from which they declaim on the subject of Roman Catholic grievances, exhort to the collection of rent, or denounce their Protestant neighbours, in a mode perfectly intelligible and effective, but not within the grasp of the law.

'In several towns no Roman Catholic will now deal with a Protestant shopkeeper in consequence of the priest's interdiction, and this species of interference, stirring up enmity on one hand and feelings of resentment on the other, is mainly conducive to outrage and disorder. But I think that the game of the priests is to keep the country in the highest state of excitement possible short of actual disturbance. By this course they expel from the country some of those who are opposed to their views, they weary out the resistance of others, and they think they may intimidate persons in England.

'I will not undertake to say that the time may not come when they will be leaders of actual insurgents. They make now a display of their power, and adopt every measure calculated to keep up agitation and to resist all civil government.

‘The first vacancy on the Roman Catholic bench is to be supplied by Dr. England from America, a man of all others most decidedly hostile to British interests, and the most active in fomenting the discord of this country by inflammatory letters from Charleston. With such leaders it is reasonable to anticipate the worst.

‘It is impossible to detail to you in a letter the various modes in which the Roman Catholic priesthood now interfere in every transaction of every description, how they rule the mob, the gentry, and the magistracy, how they impede the administration of justice.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Goulburn.*

‘Whitehall: Nov. 16, 1826.

‘In a report from Mr. Wilcox which I have this day received is detailed the case of a girl who, having been beaten most severely with a horsewhip by a Roman Catholic priest, applied to the magistrates at petty sessions for protection and redress.

‘It is stated that the priest being summoned paid at first no attention to the summons, that another priest did subsequently attend, but positively denied the right of the magistrates to interfere; that there being three magistrates on the bench one proposed to take the information of the girl, but was overruled by the other two; that to this hour no informations have been taken, and that the magistrate who proposed to listen to the girl’s complaint has been held up to public execration at the altar of a Roman Catholic chapel.

‘Be good enough to let me know what steps have been taken with reference to this most extraordinary statement. Possibly there may be on the part of Mr. Wilcox some misapprehension of the proceeding, but I feel quite sure that effectual measures will be adopted with the view in the first instance of ascertaining the real truth, and if it shall appear that the statement is correct, of preventing the law and the King’s authority from being insulted and trampled on in so shameless a manner.’

With such apparent possibilities of serious disturbance the Cabinet Minister responsible for Ireland thought it prudent to review the military forces at his disposal in case of need.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Goulburn.*

*(Most private.)*

Whitehall: Oct. 20, 1826.

‘As all my experience of Ireland convinces me of the policy of timely preparation against danger, I should not be disposed to trust to appearances even in times of apparently settled tranquillity. But at present there are indications amply sufficient in my opinion to warrant apprehension. The approach of winter, the events of the last election tending to dissolve the bond between landlord and tenant, the violence of the Roman Catholic demagogues, inconsistent with common sense if they desire the success of the Catholic question, all these things and many others of a similar character convince me of the absolute necessity of making every preparation calculated to meet and therefore to prevent danger from the disturbance of the peace. Let us err on the side of over-caution, if we err at all.

‘Let me, therefore, hear from you with respect to the amount of your military force. It is better to let other services suffer a little than to have the arm of the Government weakened in Ireland.

‘What is the actual number of the police force? What is their general state in respect to discipline, efficiency, and fidelity? I need not enter into minute details, or make specific inquiries as to the militia staff, yeomanry, water-guard, and every constituent part of your aggregate strength. They will all occur to you more readily than to me.

‘My chief purpose is to recommend a general survey of our arms and means of defence while we are comparatively at leisure and in security.

‘If the means of defence or of decisive interference between hostile parties ought to be strengthened, let us strengthen them.

‘I see the resolutions of all public meetings in Ireland

teeming with the expressions of loyalty and devotion to the King, and so forth. But, nevertheless, it is wise to be on the alert.'

*Mr. Goulburn to Mr. Peel.*

'Dublin Castle: Oct. 31, 1826.

'Our force consists at present of near 20,000 men. But one circumstance is not to be overlooked, a very large proportion are Roman Catholic. Whatever disturbance takes place will at once assume a religious character. Our divisions are no longer political. The language of the priests is more directed against the Protestant religion than against the Protestant ascendancy. The destruction of a Bible school is a more exciting cause than the attainment of political privilege, and it is not easy to pronounce beforehand that this religious excitement will not operate on Roman Catholic soldiers, in a disturbance which, if it arise, will assume the character of a crusade.

'Do not suppose that I have at present the least doubt as to the fidelity of the army. I am merely adverting to what may hereafter be the case. Neither have I any doubt as to the fidelity of the police. They get too roughly handled by the mob to be very friendly to them, and I have no doubt at present of their doing their duty, especially when they are in a body.

'As an instance, the greater part of those who, under the direction of a magistrate, dispersed the Bible meeting at Ballinasloe were Roman Catholics, and are consequently involved with the magistrate, the Lord Lieutenant, and myself in one common denunciation.

'Of police we have about 4,000, of revenue police and waterguard about 1,500. Our militia staff might easily be augmented, and the yeomanry, though now very far from effective, might easily be revived. The former cannot be reckoned at more than 1,200 men, the numbers of the latter are uncertain—they would undoubtedly be sufficient to release from the North the regular force which might be required elsewhere.

‘ Upon the whole, I think that if a force be at hand in England to give us assistance if required, we can go on safely without an immediate increase of our army here. We have force enough to interpose between conflicting parties and to restrain them, unless some extraordinary event should occur to give them additional consistency and vigour.

‘ I have thus given you the best opinion which I can form. The state of society here is so disorganised, and the Government has so inferior an authority to other powers acting on the people, that the opinion formed to-day may be quite changed to-morrow. I can only promise you that the moment I see any indications of more immediate danger I will let you know. I am sure you will not be the less liberal in giving us assistance because we have been anxious not to require it unnecessarily.’

While inquiring as to the military force at his disposal, Mr. Peel took not less pains to inform himself as to the hopes entertained in Ireland of continuing to resist the Roman Catholic claims, and, in the event of their being conceded, as to the best securities to be taken against the substitution, which he feared, of Catholic for Protestant ascendancy.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. J. Leslie Foster, M.P.*

‘ (Private and confidential.)

‘ Whitehall : Nov. 3, 1826.

‘ It appears to me of the utmost importance that we should know the truth, and the whole truth, respecting Irish popery and all its adjuncts. I have long expected what appears to be coming to pass, that the Catholic question would assume more of the character of religious division and acerbity than it did before the restoration of the Bourbons and the re-establishment of popery in France. The *odium theologicum* seems pretty nearly at its height in Ireland.

‘ Of course we shall be told that the religious fever is either caused, or extremely exasperated, by the civil disabilities. This I doubt, and I should not be at all surprised to see one of the first consequences of “ Catholic Emancipa-

tion" a much more marked division than there is at present between Catholics and "heretics," and a much closer union among all classes of the latter. The Catholics, having nothing to lose, will speak out more plainly. Those of the Protestants who contended for equality of civil privileges will be against Catholic domination, and that bond of union which now exists between a large class of Protestants and the Catholics, arising out of feelings of pity and the sense of injustice, will be at an end. There will remain the bond of fear, which at this moment unites with the Catholics in a very reluctant confederacy many of the Protestants, but that is a very precarious tie; dissolve it, and there will be increased hatred.

'These considerations, and the approaching effort which will be made in the new Parliament to force the question against all obstacles, appear to me to make it of great importance that we should know the truth before it is too late. The greater the prospect of the success of the Catholic question, the more important it is that all its bearings should be thoroughly understood.

'When I see it inevitable, I shall (taking due care to free my motives from all suspicion) try to make the best terms for the future security of the Protestant. How can this be done if we close our eyes to actual or possible dangers?

'Get, therefore, all the information that you have a legitimate claim to, as bearing upon the objects of your [educational] inquiry.'

*Mr. J. Leslie Foster, M.P., to Mr. Peel.*

(*Most confidential.*)

Dublin: Nov. 6, 1826.

'I cannot say how fully I agree with your views respecting the consequences of Emancipation. The most practical safeguard would be a modification of the franchise. If the present election laws were to remain untouched, you would have at least sixty Catholic members. And such Catholics! Sheil for Louth, and O'Connell for any southern county he

might choose. Their presence in the House of Commons would be the least part of the mischief, a *bellum servile* would ensue all over Ireland.

‘The safeguard would be not in an abolition of the forty shilling franchise, but in the adoption of a principle, that contribution of a certain amount to the county cess should be required to entitle the freeholder to vote. I could suggest an arrangement upon this principle, that would be only in analogy to the English rules respecting the land tax, and which would in its practical effects reduce the sixty Catholics to eight or ten, and secure that the latter should be gentlemen of respectability.’

To another Ulster correspondent, who suggests that the Government are allowing the Catholic Association to defy the law, with a view to convincing Englishmen of the necessity for a compromise, Mr. Peel replies that he is as free as ever to oppose all further concessions.

*Sir George Hill to Mr. Peel.*

‘Crookhall: Nov. 2, 1826.

‘The state of this island under the Government of Great Britain cannot be permitted to remain as it is. So much has become the common observation of every man who gives any attention to the political situation. What is the Cabinet, then, to do (suppose them capable of mutual concession on the popish question) for the object of giving peace and quiet to the country? I feel it a duty imposed upon me, as well aware of Protestant sentiment, at least in Ulster, to apprise such an esteemed friend as yourself of its present bearings.

‘The lively active opposition to the popish claims has considerably abated. But, with a few exceptions in the North, those claims are more dreaded and abhorred than ever. Why, then (you may ask), does something approaching to apathy manifest itself?

‘A general opinion is prevalent that Government have not interfered with the Roman Catholic Association, nor



executed the law for their suppression, nor meddled with their conduct in collecting the rent, nor their directing the interference of priests in elections, nor their establishing a new order of associated Liberators, nor prosecuted for the most unparalleled outrageous libel against the presumptive heir to the throne—all this for the purpose of convincing John Bull that the energy, power, and determination of the Roman Catholics are uncontrollable, that resistance to their claim has become inadmissible, and that there is an intention on the part of the Government to yield.

‘This is the more believed from Liverpool, Peel, and Canning having each and all powerfully co-operated in legislating against the Roman Catholic Association in 1825 ; yet when Orangemen almost universally, in obedience to that law, disappear, the Association assume a more daring aspect, more dangerous to the interests of Protestants and to the connection with England, and remain unmolested, nay boast of their impunity, and proclaim that Plunket does not intend to put the law in force against them. There is a belief that all this is calculated upon by Government as the means of satisfying England that some arrangement towards concession must be made.

‘With this, other motives are traceable for diminished zeal in opposing the popish claim. The commercial men begin to measure their trading interests in contrast with their Protestant politics. Another class among the small gentry (heretofore active) now reconcile themselves to be passive, to obtain tranquillity as they allege, as Government have decided upon concession. These, however, say so with a sigh, and a hope that ample securities will be required. With these I may include very many of the wealthier Presbyterians. But the generality of them, and almost all the farming class, are against compromise of any kind.

‘Thus far I have endeavoured to put you in possession of Protestant dispositions in Ulster. Act as you may on this subject, you have not much to dread or to hope from their operation. I will not make these admissions in

public, in doing so I should be called recreant. On the contrary, I have acted and will continue to act in co-operation with those who are zealous against the Roman claims.

‘If the division on the first debate of the question should be favourable to the Romans, most Irish Protestants will be for immediate compromise. You know not, scarcely can guess in England, the wretched turmoil this subject causes here. Popery, its prospects and probable effect on Protestant interests, are the topics of daily domestic discussion, and enter into almost every transaction of life, private as well as public. This is a very unhappy state of society, and not only disgusts but wearies a man out of his principle upon the question. Yet we have here an honest phalanx of gentlemen who will stand by their Protestant friends and leaders to the last.

‘All this arises from want of leadership, for the constitution of this Empire is a constitution of party. The time has now gone by, however, to regenerate a party Protestant, therefore I despair of accomplishing more than a bargain which, for the moment better or worse, will eventually terminate in Ireland becoming a popish country.

‘Yours devotedly,

‘G. F. HILL.’

*Mr. Peel to Sir George Hill.*

‘(Secret and confidential.)

‘Whitehall: Nov. 9, 1826.

‘I presume that I shall shortly see you, and therefore I will not write at length in answer to your letter.

‘My experience of public life has shown me several instances in which deep and refined motives of policy are attributed to public men who have been all the while acting on very simple principles, and are quite unconscious of all the mysteries and subtleties visible to those who speculate on their conduct. Thus it is with our friends in Ulster.

‘At least, I can speak for myself. I am no party to any preconcerted forbearance towards the Roman Catholic

Association for the purpose of facilitating a compromise on the Catholic question, or for any other purpose whatever.

‘I think the law against associations that break the law, against libellers and seditious orators, ought to be enforced whenever the violation is sufficiently flagrant, and there is a reasonable hope of a successful issue of the prosecution—nay, whenever there is a sincere conviction that it is the duty of an honest and impartial jury to find a verdict for the Crown.

‘So far from overlooking the infamous aggressions of Mr. Sheil, I have had the opinions of all the King’s law officers taken on the subject, and am still occupied in conferences with those of England. There has been no inclination on the part of the Irish Government, not the slightest, to spare Mr. Sheil; but of course this, as indeed all that I say to you on this subject, is between ourselves.

‘I know nothing of compromise; I am as unfettered on the Roman Catholic question, as able to offer unqualified opposition to further concessions, as I ever was at any period of my life.’

As the winter advanced, Canning’s policy, supported by Peel, for defence of constitutional liberty in Portugal made it necessary to call suddenly for an inconvenient reduction of the military force in Ireland.

*Mr. Gouiburn to Mr. Peel.*

‘Dublin Castle: Dec. 11, 1826.

‘Never was a requisition more unexpected than that which you have made upon us for troops. It is difficult to say upon the spur of the moment how far it may be possible to comply with it. The Lord Lieutenant has every disposition to do all that can be done.’

‘Dec. 12.—Our security against disturbance will be further diminished by the removal from England of that force which we might have considered as an available reserve in case of urgent danger.

‘I presume you will have no difficulty in permitting us, if it be found requisite, to call upon the pensioners and

again form a veteran battalion. The Lord Lieutenant does not ask it at present, but a week may change the face of events, and give more distinct reason for apprehension.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Goulburn.*

(*Private.*)

'Whitehall: Dec. 15, 1826.

'I think it hardly necessary to assure Lord Wellesley and you of the cordial support of the Government to any measures which necessity may compel you to adopt in order to make up for the reduction of your military force. Very prompt and energetic measures might be necessary, and even the delay of a reference here might diminish their effect.

'Lord Wellesley will, in such a case, act upon the full assurance that the measures taken without our express concurrence will be considered in the same light as if they had been adopted on our suggestion.

'I suppose the constabulary force can be thoroughly depended on, and is so constituted as to admit of a very rapid extension should it be advisable to extend it.'

At the same time Mr. Peel found much difficulty in obtaining from the Lord Lieutenant and the law officers responsible opinions on the expediency of prosecuting the Catholic Association, as to which he had doubts.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Goulburn.*

(*Most private.*)

'Dec. 15, 1826.

'The opinion of the law officers was accompanied by the briefest private letter from Lord Wellesley. I doubt whether such a letter on such a subject was ever written before. How is it possible that we can form an opinion on the policy of prosecuting the Association on such documents as those which I have hitherto received?

'Pray write to me your own opinion, confidentially if you please, on the whole subject. Collect as far as you can

what is the opinion of Lord Wellesley, if he has formed any at all.

‘The events that have occurred since you left London, the sending of our troops to Portugal, and the effect which this measure may produce in Ireland, either by the impression made on the public mind or by the reduction of your military force, all must enter into the consideration.’

*Mr. Goulburn to Mr. Peel.*

‘(Private.)’

‘Dublin Castle: Dec. 17, 1826.’

‘My impression is, that the Lord Lieutenant is anxious to throw the responsibility of acting or of forbearing on anyone besides himself. I hope, however, to see him again tomorrow, and will then state to you what his feeling appears to be, and what my own is.’

‘Dec. 20.—You ask me for my private opinion as to the expediency of proceeding against the Catholic Association. I will give it without reserve.’

‘I see no reason for prosecuting the Association at the present moment which did not exist in an equal or greater degree in January last, when it was determined, and I think upon good grounds, to be expedient to forbear.’

‘The main objection to forbearance which the law officers have urged is the imputation of dealing unfairly by the Orange societies, which the Act has effectually suppressed, while the Catholic Association has continued in full force. I do not give much weight to this objection, because I have never considered the suppression of these different societies as resting at all upon the same grounds.’

‘If the influence of the Association is to be judged of by the attendance at its meetings, it has certainly very much declined. The numbers are very small, sometimes scarcely a quorum. The speakers have on some occasions themselves complained of it.’

‘If I am right in considering their influence to be diminished, the danger of their continuance must be

diminished also. Nor do I see anything in the circumstances of the country likely to afford a more favourable field for mischief than they before possessed. The distresses of 1825-6 were at least as alarming a conjuncture of public affairs as the possible war of 1826, likely to lead to far more discontent, and therefore more to assist their operations.

‘I should be an advocate for proceeding against them if I could satisfy my own mind that their suppression would diminish that excitement which prevails in great part of this country. I, however, do not think that that excitement depends so much upon the acts of the Association as some are disposed to imagine. I attribute it to other circumstances, originally growing out of the conduct or the orders of that body, but operating now quite independently of it. The local and parochial meetings which have lately been held have had more influence in producing agitation than the meetings of the Association. The tours made by Messrs. MacDonnell, MacDermot, O’Connell, and Sheil, and the inflammatory speeches delivered by them on their circuits of mischief, have produced an immediate effect on districts which had, in spite of the Association, preserved their tranquillity.

‘The efforts of the priesthood, though originally called into action by the Association, are quite independent of them. The priesthood having felt their strength will continue to exert it. They are a body more fitted for business, admirably disciplined, and acting more secretly, and (whether the Association exist or not) they will, as I believe, continue to direct Roman Catholic affairs in this country with more mischievous effect and with equal unity of object.

‘This is a hasty summary of my individual opinion. It has been formed without communication either with the law officers or the Lord Lieutenant. I will only add that I am quite open to change my opinion upon discussion with anyone who may view the matter differently, and

am not afraid of being charged with inconsistency for doing so, as soon as I am convinced that I am in error.

‘Ever most affectionately yours,

‘HENRY GOULBURN.’

‘*Dec. 23.*—I saw the Lord Lieutenant yesterday. He was decidedly of opinion that the influence of the Association was diminished, or rather transferred to aggregate and other meetings which have been held in different parts of the country. He doubted whether even a successful prosecution would produce a favourable effect on the public mind. He apprehended that its result would be rather to aggravate existing evils, and hence, having some doubts as to the success of a prosecution, stated himself adverse to its adoption. He gave these opinions without any previous intimation from me of what mine were.’

‘*Dec. 26.*—The Attorney-General states that he had not thought it part of his official duty to give a formal opinion, but that he had no hesitation in expressing one against a prosecution. His objection was principally founded on the doubt entertained by him as to the probability of a conviction.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Canning.*

‘Whitehall: Dec. 28, 1826.

‘The legal opinions respecting the Roman Catholic Association were accompanied with no statement of facts or opinions respecting the policy of enforcing the law. I wrote, therefore, privately to Goulburn, pointing out that the question of policy must be determined very much by local considerations, of which it was next to impossible to form a judgment here, unassisted by any communication from those in authority in Ireland. I have received two private letters from him on the subject, which I send to you. You will see that they are quite private ones.’

*Mr. Canning to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Foreign Office : Dec. 28, 1826.

‘ I return Goulburn’s letters with many thanks for the perusal of them. The coincidence of his opinion with that of the Lord Lieutenant appears to set the question at rest.’

Mr. Peel’s thoughts were not engrossed by Ireland only. It was in the winter of 1826 that he began to shape in his own mind the great reform in the police of London, now so familiarly associated with his name.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Hobhouse.*

‘ Whitehall : Dec. 8, 1826.

‘ I have given notice for an inquiry into the state of the Police in the district that surrounds the Metropolis, for after the recess.

‘ The continued increase of crime in London and its neighbourhood appears to me to call for some decisive measure, and I feel satisfied that I can make a better arrangement after a searching inquiry and a thorough exposure of the defects of the present system, in regard to the administration of justice by county magistrates, and state of the police by night and day, than in any other mode.

‘ I am strongly inclined to think that there is but one effectual remedy.

‘ My plan would be to take a radius of ten miles, St. Paul’s being the centre. I consider the whole of the district included within the range of the circumference (excepting the City of London, with which I should be afraid to meddle) as one great city, the laws of which ought to be administered by paid and responsible functionaries, and the police to be managed on a uniform plan. I would make six Police Divisions, not limiting them as in my sketch by straight lines, but throwing together contiguous parishes.



I would have no concern with parochial authorities, but parochial boundaries might be more convenient than straight lines or any arbitrary limits.

‘ In each division I would have a police office about seven miles from London, but I doubt whether I would have the police of the district under the exclusive control of the divisional justices.

‘ I would relieve parishes from all rates on account of parochial constables or watch, subjecting all inhabitants in lieu of those rates to a rate for a general police. Perhaps my plan is too extensive, and I shall never be able to overcome the combined opposition of vestries and all other parish authorities. I think, however, I can succeed in showing that the present system is thoroughly defective, which is the first step towards a remedy.’

But events were impending which deferred the reform for two years.

On Jan. 5, 1827, the Duke of York died, and the command of the army passed to the Duke of Wellington, but not before a misapprehension on his part, and a foolish fancy of the King, had caused a correspondence of some interest, showing how any other appointment would have been regarded by the Duke, by Lord Liverpool, and by Peel.

*Mr. Arbuthnot to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Woodford, near Kettering : Jan. 5, 1827.

‘ I had this morning a letter from the Duke of Wellington, telling me that Lord Bathurst had appeared to intimate to him that he was not to be Commander-in-Chief. I know that for personal reasons the Duke had rather he had not the appointment; but I am also sure, by an expression he used to me, that he will be very much surprised, and, I would add, not a little offended. Is it possible that Canning can have objected to it? I am well aware how strongly you feel the Duke’s value, and how much you would object to his being slighted. But the Duke would be mortified and

annoyed beyond measure were he to know that I had touched upon the subject; therefore pray let it not transpire.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Arbuthnot.*

'(Most private.)

'Whitehall: Jan. 6, 1827.

'Your letter surprises me greatly, and I cannot help hoping and believing that the Duke of Wellington has misunderstood Lord Bathurst.

'I saw Lord Liverpool the day before yesterday. I purposely took the opportunity of saying to him, "Of course, there can be no doubt that the Duke of Wellington must succeed the Duke of York." Lord Liverpool seemed to entertain none whatever. I have never heard a whisper that any other person than the Duke of Wellington was thought of for the command of the British army, and I must say that I think any other appointment would be monstrous. In fact, who is there?

'I feel so warm an interest in everything that concerns the feelings of the Duke of Wellington, that your letter, referring to such an authority as Lord Bathurst, has disconcerted me a little. Still, I think there must be a misapprehension somewhere.

'The command-in-chief of the British army would be a great distinction conferred on the Duke of Wellington, conferred after it had been held by the Heir Presumptive, and conferred, too, on such grounds as it would be if it were given to him now. But it is one that he is most justly entitled to, and I shall be bitterly disappointed if he has it not.'

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

'Whitehall: Jan. 6, 1827.

'You ought to succeed the Duke of York. The Duke of Cambridge and the Duke of Cumberland are for different reasons equally out of the question. What other person can pretend to it?

'The command in itself may be no object to you; you

may not personally wish for it; if the question were between you and another subject, you might have a difficulty in giving an opinion. But I do hope, indeed I firmly believe, that no false delicacy will prevent you from giving a most decided opinion against the propriety of committing such a trust as the command of the army of this country to the hands, not of the King, but of those who may for the moment have acquired an influence over him.

‘It is possible that I may be giving you unnecessary trouble, but I will without reserve repeat to you what I have heard, requesting only that, if it be new to you, you will consider this communication from me a strictly private one.

‘The King this morning told Sir Herbert Taylor that he thought it was possible that he, the King, might succeed the Duke of York in the command of the army; that he should have a secretary who might give directions in his name; that Taylor should be Adjutant-General, some provision being made for Torrens.

‘Sir Herbert told the King that he thought the arrangement quite impracticable, and I am sure that nothing would induce him to acquiesce in it.’

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

‘(Secret.)

‘Coombe Wood: Jan. 6, 1827.

‘I will tell you all that has passed so far as I am concerned.

‘I sent a messenger to Windsor this morning, with a letter of condolence, and saying that I would come to the Royal Lodge to-morrow morning if I received no commands to the contrary. Sir W. Knighton came here about three o’clock, and said that the King would be glad to see me, but that he was very nervous, and wished to know what I should propose.

‘I said that there appeared to me to be no difficulty, that the Duke of Wellington was the natural person to be Commander-in-Chief, and that I should recommend that the

office of Master-General of the Ordnance should merge for the present at least in that of Commander-in-Chief. I understood from Knighton that this arrangement would quite satisfy the King and settle everything easily.

‘The notion you mention is so preposterous that if I hear of it, which I do not think likely, I shall have no difficulty in resisting it.’

*The Duke of Wellington to Mr. Peel.*

‘Woodford: Jan. 7, 1827.

‘However extraordinary the arrangement is which you tell me that his Majesty has in contemplation, I suspected that something of the kind was in agitation. About three months ago, or possibly more, the King told me that in case he should lose his brother his Majesty wished me to be Commander-in-Chief. I entreated the King not to think of any arrangement to fill his brother’s office till it should have become absolutely necessary, saying that he well knew that I was always ready to serve him; but I recommended him to consult his Ministers, and to follow their advice.

‘I have always considered the conversation which passed between his Majesty and me, like many others, as so many empty and unmeaning words and phrases, and I consider his Majesty perfectly at liberty to make any arrangement for the command of the army that may be thought proper by the Government. It appears that his Majesty is of the same opinion, as he is very forward in his arrangement, since he has proposed to Sir Herbert Taylor to bear a part in it.

‘I conclude that before Lord Liverpool consents to such an arrangement he will consult my opinion. At all events, whenever it comes to my knowledge otherwise than confidentially, I will protest against it in the most formal manner, and with all the earnestness in my power, for the sake of the army, for that of the Government, and above all for the sake of the public.

‘I cannot express to you how much gratified I am by your letter, and I shall be very much obliged if you will write to me again.’

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

‘Coombe Wood : Jan. 7, 1827, 6 P.M.

‘I have just returned from the Royal Lodge, and I inclose a copy of a letter which I have written to the Duke of Wellington by the King’s commands. I had no difficulty on the subject. The King alluded in conversation to the periods when there had been no Commander-in-Chief. I reminded him how well the business had gone during three of the most eventful years of the war, when Sir David Dundas had been Commander-in-Chief. He quite agreed that nothing could be so bad as a Prince of the Blood Commander-in-Chief unless the individual Prince was eminently qualified for it.’

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

‘Whitehall : Monday morning, half-past 10 A.M. Jan. 8, 1827.

‘Immediately after I had seen Taylor on Saturday evening, I sent off a messenger to Lord Liverpool with a full account of what had passed at Windsor between Taylor and the King.

‘I must say in justice to Lord Liverpool that I believe no man can have felt more strongly than he did throughout that it was due to you, to the army, and to the country generally, to place you in the office of Commander-in-Chief.’

At the funeral of the Duke of York, Mr. Canning caught a violent cold, which confined him to bed. Lord Liverpool also had been seriously ill, and took it as a warning to seek relief from office. He regarded the continuance of his Government, mainly on account of the Catholic question, as precarious, ‘hanging by a thread,’ and thought it would not last through the next session.

About this time Mr. Peel had an opportunity of proving further in what esteem and affection he held his college tutor,

Dr. Lloyd. Early in 1826, a vacancy being expected in the see of Oxford, Mr. Peel, unsolicited, had called the Prime Minister's attention to the claims of the Regius Professor. This led to a long correspondence between the two friends, on Dr. Lloyd's part so frank and free from affectation of the traditional *nolo episcopari*, that in fairness to him it cannot be made public without inviting special attention to one dominant fact. The letters are those of one who in the Divinity Chair at Oxford beyond all doubt was the right man in the right place. As such, he opens to a safe and influential friend his inmost thoughts, at a crisis of vital importance for the work he had in hand. The school of theology which Dr. Lloyd aspired and laboured to found was that in which were trained the leaders of the well-known Oxford High Church Movement. The letters are of interest also as throwing incidental light on Canning's relations at this time with the University.

*Mr. Peel to Dr. Lloyd.*

*(Most private and confidential.)*

Whitehall: Feb. 22, 1826.

'I inclose the copy of a letter which I have just written to Lord Liverpool, respecting which you will of course not breathe a single word. It may fail, still it can do no harm, and its future effects may be advantageous, if its present ones are not. I need not tell you that I feel a very deep interest in the matter to which it relates.

'Would it be possible for you to do anything with Van Mildert, or with the Bishop of London? If you do, it must be from yourself. I mean you must not say that I suggested it.'

*(Inclosure.)*

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

*(Private.)*

Whitehall: Feb. 22, 1826.

'In the event of the Bishop of Durham's death, and the transfer of Legge to the see of Durham, I trust that you will give full consideration to the claims of Dr. Lloyd to succeed to the see of Oxford, on the ground of private character, of station in the University, and of learning as a scholar and divine. He was my tutor at Christ Church.

I sincerely believe that, as a man of business, he would be most useful on all matters relating to the Church in the House of Lords.

‘ If professional claims are very nicely balanced, I trust that you will allow some weight to the relation in which I have stood to Dr. Lloyd, and in which I now stand to the University and to the King’s Government. More than this I do not ask, and you will not, I am sure, consider this unreasonable, particularly when you bear in mind that I hold an office the duties of which are as irksome as those of most others of its rank, but which has not afforded to me (excepting in regard to the office of Under Secretary of State) the means of promoting or obliging a single friend.’

*Rev. Dr. Lloyd to Mr. Peel.*

‘ (*Private.*)

‘ Christ Church : Feb. 23, 1826.

‘ This instance of your kindness is to me more valuable than a thousand bishoprics. Let the event turn out as it may, I am satisfied. As long as your friendship remains to me, a bishopric more or less will neither affect my happiness nor cast a slur on my character.

‘ Yet I must tell you honestly that if Legge went to Durham, I should go to Oxford.

‘ The Bishop of London, and Chester, and several others, have all told me that they took it for a thing settled. I have thought, however, of late, whenever my mind has turned upon these things, that it was possible that Copleston might be promoted before me. Canning, too, at this moment may be particularly inclined to serve him.’

‘ Feb. 28. (*Most private.*)—I thank you most sincerely and affectionately for what you have done. When you had once determined to put my preferment on the ground of personal obligation to yourself, you did that which gave me the most unqualified testimony of your friendship, and much more than I should ever have asked you to do. But I think now that you have done enough. Will it not be higher

ground for you to take, to leave your application now to take its chance than to press it strongly, and perhaps to be refused ?

‘As for claims, these are my opinions. If Lord Liverpool takes simply the claims of the scholar, Copleston’s are fully equal to mine. So, too, in general knowledge, the world would give it in favour of him. If Lord Liverpool looks to professional merits, mine are to Copleston’s as the Andes to a molehill. There is no comparison between us. Copleston is no theologian : I am. If, again, Lord Liverpool looks to weight and influence in the University, I will give Copleston a month’s start, and beat him easily in any question that comes before us. As to popularity in the appointment, mine will be popular throughout the whole profession, Copleston’s the contrary. Such is the true state of the case.

‘But how to get these things laid before Lord Liverpool, I know not. I do not wish to go into the House of Lords with a chain of gratitude round my neck to any of my own profession. I may be obliged to differ from Howley : will it not be difficult to do this, if he is instrumental in my promotion, with my knowledge and consent ?

‘You will say that it is hard to have to act for a man who will do nothing for himself ; but can I take any step, so long as I think my honour or my pride may be committed by it ? The steps I am taking are, as it seems to me, the only legitimate steps that I can take. I am working day and night in my Professorship ; no man ever did what I am doing, or the tenth part of it ; and so *uno ore omnes prædicant*.

‘And I thought, as I tell you honestly, I should have been able to make myself a bishop in due time ; and my plan had been to ask you some years hence, if we both live so long, to exert your personal interest for me, but not for the purpose of getting a bishopric, but a translation ; the former ought to be given to merit, the second can be obtained only by interest.



‘I have no doubt whatever that Canning is pushing Copleston, and will push him, and if he knew all, he would not love me the more. Notwithstanding which, Copleston was a great coward; if he had had Hodson’s courage, he would have proposed Canning [as member for the University], and there is no saying what the result might have been. However, I know that Copleston’s *bonne volonté* has told mightily with Canning.

‘I will conclude by telling you my own real wishes about myself. My anxious desire is to make myself a great divine, and to be accounted the best in England. My second wish is to become the founder of a school of theology in Oxford. For the accomplishment of these purposes, I must remain some years longer here, say ten years from the time of my appointment to the Professorship. I shall by that time, working as I do now, have laid a strong foundation, upon which any man may build a lasting superstructure. Now, no bishopric will enable me to do this, except the see of Oxford.

‘I have now told you my most secret thoughts. What I desire is, after a few years, to be sure of a retirement with good provision in some easy bishopric, or Van Mildert’s Deanery. I want neither London nor Canterbury. They will never suit me. But I want money, because I am poor and have children; and I desire character, for I cannot live without it. Whatever after this you desire and order, I will do. God bless you! and thank you a thousand times.

‘Always yours,

‘C. LL.’

The vacancy did not at this time take place; but a year later, the Bishop of Oxford (Legge) being, apparently, a dying man, Lloyd frankly apprised Peel of it, and Peel again addressed the Prime Minister on his behalf, the candidate himself furnishing the arguments to be used. ‘I have written you,’ Dr. Lloyd says, ‘a long letter, which contains what appear to me to be the chief points which ought to be pressed. I have dwelt on my exertions in the Professorship because I do think they make out what may fairly be called a claim.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

‘ Whitehall : Jan. 18, 1827.

‘ I understand that the Bishop of Oxford is in extreme danger. My wishes with respect to his successor it is unnecessary to repeat, I say not a word on that head. But what I would entreat you chiefly to consider is the conduct of Dr. Lloyd in the Professorship of Divinity at Oxford, and (supposing him to be thought worthy of so high a station in the Church) the peculiar importance of enabling him to continue his present Divinity lectures, by his appointment to the particular bishopric which is so soon likely to be vacant.

‘ Dr. Lloyd’s chief object as Professor of Divinity has been to establish a school of theology in Oxford. He has, therefore, entirely of his own accord, in addition to the public lectures which his predecessors gave, instituted a course of private lectures, open for the last four years every day to every man of whatever standing who chose to attend them. There are clergymen of more than thirty years of age who have been in attendance on these lectures for upwards of three years, taking in that time a much wider range of theological reading than is usually taken by the members of the Church of England.

‘ I see that the “Edinburgh Review” mentions Dr. Lloyd’s conduct in the foundation of these private lectures with the greatest praise. It bears testimony to his “zealous and able exertions,” and describes the institution of the lectures as being pregnant with the greatest benefit to the University, and worthy of the spirit and good sense of the Professor. The Bishopric of Oxford is the only bishopric which would not put an end to these lectures, at least to the continuance of them by him who founded them. The influence which Dr. Lloyd has in the University from his superior attainments and kind and popular manners constitutes in my opinion an additional reason for preferring him to any other competitor for this particular see.

‘I have reason to think that Van Mildert and Blomfield consider Dr. Lloyd among the first, if not the very first theologian of this day.’

*Mr. Peel to Dr. Lloyd.*

‘Whitehall: Jan. 29, 1827.

‘I send you the inclosed in the strictest confidence. I can have no secret from you in a matter which concerns your welfare; and whatever be the result of the correspondence, it will at least be a satisfaction to me that you should know that I have not been lukewarm.

‘You will see Lord Liverpool’s letter to me, and mine to him. I have written to him temperately, but as it is the only letter of the kind—the only letter at all of an unpleasant nature—which I ever addressed to him in my life, he will not misunderstand it.’

*(Inclosure.)*

*Lord Liverpool to Mr. Peel.*

‘Jan. 22, 1827.

‘No one can be more sensible than I am of the merits of Dr. Lloyd. He will certainly be at no distant period a most proper person for the episcopal bench. But you will recollect that it is only five years or a little more since he was appointed Divinity Professor, that this appointment was given to him (upon my recommendation) at a very early age, and immediately after his being tutor and censor of the college. In the ordinary course of things, it would hardly be expected that he should be promoted to the bench so very soon.’

Lord Liverpool goes on to say that Dr. Cyril Jackson, before he died, recommended to him Dr. Gray, Prebendary of Durham, supported by the Bishop of Durham solely on account of his learning and merit, and that the Bishop of London had also spoken well of him. The letter ends:

‘I must further add, that there is a point upon which

the King naturally feels strongly, and which he presses earnestly, to which facility may be given by the promotion of Dr. Gray.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Liverpool.*

'Strathfieldsaye : Jan. 25, 1827.

'I should not have thought it becoming in me to say anything upon the subject of Dr. Lloyd's preferment to the bench, if I had not felt a conviction, which certainly remains unshaken, that no other competitor for the see of Oxford would be found with the same pretensions, so far as pretensions rest upon professional learning and eminence, character, and influence in the University combined. Under no other circumstances ought the wishes of a person in my relation to the Government and to the University to have any weight. Under these circumstances, and other things considered, I did not think them unreasonable.

'Dr. Randolph held the see of Oxford with the Professorship of Divinity. Of Dr. Gray I never heard, unless he be a clergyman who acted as a magistrate in the neighbourhood of Sunderland—of him certainly never as a candidate for the episcopal bench. Without meaning in the slightest degree to question his respectability, I confess nothing will surprise me more than the opinion of the Bishop of London, that the interest of the University and of the Church will be better promoted by the nomination of Dr. Gray than by that of Dr. Lloyd.'

*Dr. Lloyd to Mr. Peel.*

'Jan. 30, 1827.

'The secret of the whole is at the end of Lord Liverpool's letter. For whom does the King want anything? and what has Gray to give up? Surely he would not give his stall at Durham for our bishopric? But I told you some years ago that I did not think Lord Liverpool overwell inclined to me. I think so still. Do not quarrel with him for my sake. I should be sorry that you should not show him that you were hurt, but do no more. It only remains

for you to decide whether you will not beg that somebody of more fitness than Dr. Gray, either Copleston or Davison, should be put in. I think this would be a manifestation of high principle; but judge for yourself.

‘P.S.—*δεύτεραι φροντίδες σοφώτεραι*. I have determined that it is better policy that you should remain altogether quiet. Do so; I do not think I shall get off in the end the worse for it.’

*Mr. Peel to Dr. Lloyd.*

‘Whitehall: Feb. 2, 1827.

‘I have heard nothing from Lord Liverpool in reply to my last letter. If he had positively made up his mind adversely, would he not have written to me? What I said about Dr. Gray has probably made him pause. Upon the whole I am satisfied that it is better for me not to irritate an irritable temper by the exhibition of any anger just now; decidedly better that I should not suggest Copleston, or anyone else but you.

‘Believe me, in what I say, write, or do, my main, I might add my single object is to consult that which is due to your character and just claims.

‘Ever with true affection

‘Most sincerely yours,

‘ROBERT PEEL.’

*Lord Liverpool to the King.*<sup>1</sup>

‘Feb. 6, 1827.

‘The Bishop of London had no difficulty in stating his opinion that, if the bishopric is to be disposed of solely upon the ground of merit, to some person connected with the University, the pretensions of Dr. Copleston and Dr. Lloyd exceed those of any other competitor.

‘With intimate personal knowledge of Dr. Lloyd, and with the highest opinion of his attainments, and of the service he has rendered and is rendering to the University,

<sup>1</sup> From Lord Liverpool’s manuscript papers.

the Bishop would be inclined to give a preference to the claims of Dr. Copleston upon the present vacancy, upon account of his age, standing, and the station which he has filled in so distinguished a manner in the University for so many years. But he cannot answer for his opinions upon certain important questions, and it is impossible for obvious reasons to take any means for ascertaining them. The Bishop as well as Lord Liverpool could completely answer for Dr. Lloyd's orthodoxy, as well as for his learning and other eminent qualities.

'Dr. Gray has had no connection with Oxford for many years, and under these circumstances your Majesty will perhaps be induced to postpone an object which Lord Liverpool knows your Majesty has at heart, and decide between the pretensions of Dr. Copleston and Dr. Lloyd.'

The King consenting to postpone his 'object,' and preferring, as was evidently intended, the candidate of undoubted orthodoxy, Mr. Peel announces the result with fervent satisfaction.

*Mr. Peel to Dr. Lloyd.*

'Whitehall: Feb. 9, 1827.

'I do most heartily rejoice in being enabled at length to tell you that you are to be Bishop of Oxford. The appointment takes place under circumstances most honourable and satisfactory to you. If you knew the anxiety which I have felt respecting this appointment for the last two or three days (which has, however, tempted me to do nothing unworthy of your station or mine), you would also know the full extent of my esteem and affection for you. Lord Liverpool will write to you by this post. Answer him, as he really deserves to be answered, very warmly.'

*Dr. Lloyd to Mr. Peel.*

'Christ Church: Feb. 10, 1827.

'Ten thousand thanks for all your kindness and anxiety on my account. I had not hoped that your earnest en-

deavours would have been crowned with such a prosperous conclusion, but I should still have felt the same sensations of gratitude and affection towards you—never at any time of my life having doubted for a moment of your regard for me. Words are but a poor compensation for services of this kind, but words and feelings are all I have to offer you.’

Other letters show Peel’s warm regard for still earlier ties of personal affection. To the chosen comrade of his country walks and private sporting expeditions at Harrow he writes :

*Mr. Peel to Captain Anstruther.*

‘ March 28, 1827.

‘ I never can forget that you were one of my earliest and dearest friends, nor has the length of time which has elapsed since we met abated in the slightest degree the interest which I took in your welfare when we were inseparable companions. Write to me from time to time, and tell me in what manner you think I can be serviceable to you.’

In fulfilment of such assurances, sundry letters record how willingly every exertion was made to obtain promotion for Captain Anstruther, and to provide education and employment for his son.

## CHAPTER XIII.

1827.

Lord Liverpool disabled—Attempt to reconstruct his Government—Peel and Wellington—Peel and Canning—Canning Prime Minister—Half the Cabinet resign—Croker out of Favour—Peel's Reasons for Resigning—Bishop Lloyd's View—Canning's Opinion of Peel—Canning with the Whigs—Canning's Death.

THE year 1827 brought much political change: the prostration by illness of one Prime Minister; the succession, and within four months the death, of another; the entrance, to be quickly followed by the exit, of a third.

On Saturday morning, Feb. 17 (only ten days after promoting Dr. Lloyd), Lord Liverpool was struck down by apoplexy and paralysis, from which he never rallied, though his life was prolonged for nearly two years. This sad event, with its attendant necessities and uncertainties, caused much embarrassment. Mr. Peel announced it the same day to the King, to the Duke of Wellington, and to Mr. Canning, who was ill at Brighton. On Sunday he saw Canning and the King.

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

Whitehall: Feb. 17, 1827.

'You will hear with deep regret that Lord Liverpool was this morning seized with apoplexy about half-past ten, when he was at breakfast alone. Dr. Driver was in the house, and blood was immediately taken from Lord Liverpool's arm. He has since shown more intelligence in his manner and countenance, but the right side remains incapacitated. I have sent a messenger to the King.'



‘Pavilion, Brighton : Sunday, half-past 12, Feb. 18.

‘My coming here was precisely the right course, quite satisfactory to the King, and, as you will perceive from the inclosed, equally so to Canning.

‘I told the King that your impression, on the first impulse of private feelings and personal regard for his Majesty, was to come to Brighton, but that you thought on reflection such a proceeding might excite and alarm the public. He said he should have been most happy to see you, but thought you had acted wisely in remaining in town.’

(*Inclosure.*)

*Mrs. Canning to Mr. Peel.*

‘[Brighton : Saturday, Feb. 17], half-past 9 P.M.

‘Dear Mr. Peel,—Mr. Canning is happily so much better to-night that I have thought it best to communicate to him without delay the very afflicting intelligence contained in your letter. He desires me to say that it will be the greatest comfort and satisfaction to him to have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow morning. Accept my best thanks for the kindness and consideration with which you have made this melancholy event known to Mr. Canning.

‘Yours very sincerely,

‘J. CANNING.

‘P.S.—Mr. Canning has this moment received a letter from the King, inclosing your two notes to his Majesty, and written in the greatest affliction and dismay.’

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

‘Pavilion : Sunday evening, half-past 7.

‘As the King is here alone, I have thought it better to remain until to-morrow morning, at any rate. We still think that while Lord Liverpool lives it would be better for the present to act as if we did not entirely despair of his recovery, and to go on with business in the House of

Commons. The King is tranquil and composed, but appears very uncertain as to the course which it is best for him to pursue.'

*Mr. Canning to Mr. Peel.*

'Brighton: Feb. 23, 1827.

'My dear Peel,—I saw the King yesterday, and found his Majesty surprisingly well in health (though with gout still in feet, knees, and one hand), and in a calmness and equanimity of temper and spirits far beyond what I could have expected. This state of mind his Majesty was good enough to attribute to *our* joint advice of Monday last, which, he said, he was every hour more and more satisfied was the expedient and correct course to pursue, and had saved him a world of worry and uneasiness. It would have been highly indelicate, he said, to have presumed either a fatal or a hopeless issue to poor Lord Liverpool's illness, and it would be a great satisfaction to us all, when Lord Liverpool came to himself sufficiently to learn what had passed, that there had been no step taken, or even mooted, for the disposal of his succession.

'We had then a long talk of near a couple of hours, during which his Majesty went through a variety of subjects, but did not revert at all to the state of the Government till I was taking leave. He then said that he feared there were great difficulties. I answered that undoubtedly there were difficulties, but implored his Majesty to adhere to his resolution of not going to meet them by stirring any question prematurely. His Majesty promised that he would adhere to that resolution.

'He talked of writing to the Duke of Wellington to come to see him, which (as before) I encouraged. If you like to communicate what I have written to you to the Duke, pray do so.

'Ever, my dear Peel,

'Most truly yours,

'GEORGE CANNING.

‘I this moment receive accounts of Lord Liverpool, in the highest degree satisfactory and encouraging.’

The month of March was passed in suspense. Evidently Lord Liverpool would be seen in public life no more. Who should fill his place? How might his Government be kept together? Could some peer be found, as the King suggested, of like opinions to Lord Liverpool’s, under whom all would serve? This was tried first. Names were put forward—Lord Bathurst, Lord Melville, Mr. Robinson (to be made a peer), the Duke of Wellington—but none obtained acceptance. Could an anti-Catholic Government be formed, as Canning suggested, without Canning? No one would attempt it, unless perhaps Lord Eldon. Could a Government friendly to the Catholic claims be formed out of the old Ministry, under Canning, but, as Peel suggested, without Peel? That was tried last, and failed. Half the Cabinet resigned.

The days for Cabinets divided on the Catholic question had almost if not quite gone by. As if to mark this, early in March, while all was yet uncertain, the Catholic question came on for debate in the House of Commons. The ayes and noes were nearly balanced, but the noes had it. The violence of the Irish leaders had caused a reaction which increased the Protestant strength on a division by some thirty votes. In the previous Parliament (in 1825) Sir Francis Burdett’s Catholic Relief Bill had passed its second reading by a majority of twenty-seven. In the newly elected House his resolution to the same effect was defeated by four. In the debate the most powerful advocate of Catholic claims was Canning; the most vigorous opponent, speaking from the same bench, Peel. And had the majority, in the new Parliament as in the old, been with Canning, it was Peel’s intention to resign.<sup>1</sup>

The relations at this time between Canning and the Duke of Wellington, whom the King now sent for, were strained. They differed on foreign affairs, and there were other causes for mutual dislike. Between Peel and the Duke, on the contrary, there was a good understanding and a general readiness to act together, but with some reserve on both sides, which Arbuthnot, the Duke’s chief confidant, strove to overcome, suggesting that either the Duke should be Minister, or Peel.

<sup>1</sup> See his letter to Canning, April 17.

*Mr. Arbuthnot to Mr. Peel.*

‘Whitehall Place: March 10, 1827.

‘Knowing as I do that it is always most satisfactory to the Duke to communicate confidentially with you, and to act with you in union, I was very glad last night to find that the time, as you felt, was come when you and he must again talk together with a view to the steps now to be jointly taken.

‘Upon reflecting on what was said between us, it has occurred to me that, for the purpose of thoroughly eliciting each other’s opinions, it will be well if you would just name the three persons to whom (as I told you Lady Conyngham said) the King could exclusively look—yourself, Canning, and the Duke. And I will at once tell you why I wish you to do this.

‘Had the Duke of York lived, there would have been nothing to prevent the Duke of Wellington from being the Minister of the King, and the party had thought it advisable. He is at all times ready to give his services when they can be useful. The time has been when the King would not have heard of any other successor to Lord Liverpool. The recent change in the Duke’s situation has in this respect caused great difficulties; but as I am aware of the feeling which he has for you, I own to you I am most exceedingly anxious that, as far as discussion goes, it should be seen by him that you do not entirely put him out of the question.

‘The Duke, as I am sure you well know, has but the one thought of being useful. It has never crossed his mind to wish to be Minister. Had you fortunately the lead of the House of Commons, nothing would rejoice him so much as to see you at the head of the whole, and he would labour night and day to give you all the aid in his power. But he cannot bring himself to put trust in Canning. He thinks that in his own department there is much of trickery; he sees that the sons and relations of our most vehement opponents are taken into employ; and he cannot divest

himself of the idea that, directly or indirectly, there has been an understanding with some of the leaders of Opposition. These among various other reasons indispose him to belong to a Government of which Canning was to be the head.

‘On the other hand, he is alive to the danger of throwing power into the hands of the Whigs. He is quite aware of the difficulty of his own position. I mean with reference to his being Commander-in-Chief when not in the Cabinet. But the only way to steer well through difficulties such as these is for you and him to open unreservedly your minds to each other. It is therefore on that account that I wish you at once to moot the question with him which relates to himself.

‘I give you my honour I have never heard him say so, but my strong belief is that he would be glad to discuss with you what there is for him and against him in respect to the Premiership. And this I know full well, that he is influenced by the sole and exclusive wish of replacing Lord Liverpool by the best person that can be chosen. Again I must tell you that most happy will he be if you can be that person. I see no way of safety except through you and the Duke. Therefore it is that I have troubled you with this long and confidential letter. As it requires no answer, pray do not think of writing me one single line.’

Meanwhile the King, in much doubt how to act, was consulting with his private advisers. Of the alternatives placed before them, an interesting record was communicated in 1846 to Sir Robert Peel by Mr. S. R. Lushington, who thus explains how he came to be taken into confidence.

‘That Mr. Canning so entirely confided in me at that time, having never done so before, arose out of a letter of mine to Sir W. Knighton, which in consequence of his absence from the Cottage at Windsor the King opened and read, and Sir William afterwards put it into Mr. Canning’s hands. Hence his entire change of conduct to me.’

Mr. Lushington, it will be seen, held that the Duke of Wellington was out of the question, that Canning should have precedence of Peel, and that the resignations likely to be caused would provide convenient vacancies for friends of Canning.

*Mr. S. R. Lushington, M.P., to Sir W. Knighton.*

‘ Treasury Chambers : March 1827.

‘ Nothing could be more wise and more kind than the decision taken by Mr. Canning and Mr. Peel after they had seen his Majesty at Brighton—to give ample time for any change which might, under the blessing of Providence, take place in Lord Liverpool’s condition ; a decision so entirely in union with the graciously expressed feeling of the King towards “ his faithful Minister and friend,”<sup>2</sup> that it could not but afford the greatest consolation to all Lord Liverpool’s friends.

‘ In the interval which has elapsed those two great subjects, the Corn and Catholic questions, on which the Cabinet has been so much divided, have been decided for the present in the House of Commons, and thus we have removed two of the chief obstacles to the reorganisation of the present Government upon firm and friendly foundations. No advantage can arise from further delay in recommending to the King the reconstruction of his Cabinet. It would appear to me that the choice must be made out of two persons, Mr. Canning and Mr. Peel.

‘ I put the Duke of Wellington out of the question, for however great his military reputation, and shining now with greater lustre in the discharge of the distinguished office he holds as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, there is something so inconsistent with, and so hostile to, the free constitution of this country in having a military captain at the head of the Executive Government, that the jealousy of the people would be awakened. Besides, the Duke has another insuperable objection against him. However splendid his fame and talents, he is wanting in that essential requisite for a minister, the power of explaining and supporting in debate the measures of the Government. And further, considering how much the Crown’s powers of grace and favour have been diminished in latter years, it

<sup>2</sup> The King’s letter to Lady Liverpool.

would be of great benefit that its First Minister, who is to dispense the small residue of these favours, should be in the House of Commons.

‘A comparison of the respective claims of Mr. Canning and Mr. Peel is not without much difficulty, but my own opinion after much consideration is quite decided in favour of Mr. Canning’s priority of claim, and is supported by the reasoning of Lord Liverpool himself, and by facts which have latterly come to my knowledge. It has been with me a matter of duty to make myself thoroughly acquainted with all the details of the decision in our House upon the Catholic question. Although rejected on a recent occasion by a very small majority, I now confidently expect that whenever that question shall be again brought before the House of Commons, it will be decided in favour of the Catholic claims. Such a decision would open an immediate scene of contention, when the two Houses and the King would be placed in a most embarrassing situation.

‘I further believe that no person has power at the present moment to relieve the King from the difficulty but Mr. Canning. Whenever Lord Liverpool expressed a desire that Mr. Canning might succeed him in the Government, I have no doubt that this consideration had great influence upon him. He regarded Mr. Canning as the first in order of succession; always, however, predicting that the Tory Government must soon fall into the able hands of Mr. Peel, unless destroyed by their own internal distraction, which would be the certain means of a Radical-Whig triumph in the establishment of the power of that party in the State.

‘From this reasoning it would seem that three courses are open for his Majesty’s adoption. The first is to instruct Mr. Canning to form a Government precisely on the principles of Lord Liverpool’s Administration, directing him to retain as many of his present colleagues and of the subordinates in office as may wish to continue under him. This course would, I think, give him grace as well as strength in his opening measures, and at the same time

afford him the means of gratifying many of his old followers in the disposal of the vacancies which would be resigned into his hands.

‘The second course would be to instruct Mr. Peel to form an exclusive Protestant Government. It is my firm belief that Mr. Peel would not undertake the task, from a due sense of the arduous difficulties it would entail upon his Majesty and himself; and if he would not do it on his own account, there can be no doubt of his refusing to engage in it for the Duke of Wellington or any other person. It is not to be expected that Mr. Canning would resign the lead in the House of Commons and act under his junior. Mr. Peel would therefore have, at the outset of his Government, the talents and the influence of Mr. Canning directly opposed to him, and cordially supported by the whole phalanx of Whig aristocracy and Radical Liberalism in the House of Commons and throughout the country. I should be very sorry to see this experiment tried. No man can foresee what effect might be produced upon the fundamental institutions of the monarchy.

‘The third course is to form a Radical-Whig Government upon principles totally opposite to the whole course of Lord Liverpool’s Administration. But this I will not argue upon, trusting to his Majesty’s wisdom under the blessing of Providence to avert it.’

On March 29 the King saw Mr. Canning, and on that day Canning first sounded Peel as to his joining a Ministry of which Canning should be the head. Peel answered, ‘I will tell you without reserve what are my feelings in my particular situation. They dictate to me retirement from office if his Majesty should select you to form an Administration.’ This was uttered frankly without impairing the good will between them. Next day Peel went to see the Duke of Wellington, but nothing definite appears to have been arranged at this interview towards clearing up the difficulties of the situation, and the Duke afterwards complained to Mr. Arbutnot that he must have been misrepresented to Canning by the King.



*Mr. Arbuthnot to Mr. Peel.*

‘ March 30, 1827.

‘ I saw the Duke this morning after you had been with him. I found him in a very unsatisfactory state of mind, proceeding very much from an idea that the King had told *lies* about him to Canning, and had thus given a false colour to his language and his conduct. If I saw you, I could better explain what I think is passing in the Duke’s mind ; and if you should be at home and alone, I would step over to you. The Duke dines in this neighbourhood, and he told me that he would call here afterwards. I shall be very glad if you and he can meet this evening, and I am sure he would go to you if he were certain of finding you at home.’

The meeting was prevented by a letter from the King summoning Mr. Peel to Windsor, where he was charged with a message to Canning, thus recorded :

‘ Whitehall : March 31, 1827.

‘ Mr. Peel presents his humble duty and has the honour to inform your Majesty that on his return to London yesterday he saw Mr. Canning, and made the following communication to him.

‘ “ That your Majesty had mentioned to Mr. Peel the memorandum which had been written by Mr. Canning on the preceding day in your Majesty’s presence, and which Mr. Canning was authorised by your Majesty to communicate to the Cabinet. That Mr. Peel had ventured humbly to express doubts to your Majesty as to the policy and propriety of the particular course of proceeding contemplated by that memorandum. That your Majesty was pleased to observe to Mr. Peel that if Mr. Canning should concur in these doubts he was at liberty to withhold that memorandum from the Cabinet.”

‘ Mr. Peel earnestly hopes that the above communication was in exact conformity with your Majesty’s wishes as expressed to Mr. Peel.’

The memorandum thus cancelled was one embodying a suggestion of the King's that his Ministers should choose some peer holding Lord Liverpool's opinions under whom they could all consent to serve.

'Mr. Peel objected on principle to the delegation by the King of this act of royalty.'<sup>3</sup>

The King now wrote urging Mr. Peel to come to terms with Mr. Canning, offering himself to guarantee the safety of the Protestant Constitution.

'(Most private.)

'Royal Lodge: Saturday, March 31, 1827.

'The King proposes to be in town on Thursday, and really hopes that by that time Mr. Peel will have made some progress and have come to some understanding with Mr. Canning relative to the reorganisation of the Government, for, after all, the King must be informed by Mr. Peel what conclusions Mr. Canning and himself are likely to come to, before the King can hold a satisfactory communication with the different members of his Cabinet.

'The point of consistency on the Protestant question rests between the King and Mr. Peel. The King, on the one hand, considers himself Mr. Peel's guarantee, and on the other, Mr. Peel as the King's. So that no means<sup>4</sup> [?], let the Government be formed as it may, can be ever practised with a view of carrying the Catholic question, or of injuring the Protestant Constitution of the country.

'G. R.'

As in 1812, so now, Canning, it appears, was 'embarrassed' by the Catholic claims. He had told the King that 'most happy should he be if, by any fair management or reasonable compromise, he could contrive to protect his Majesty from the vexation he had experienced in the annual agitation of this painful question;' but he could give his Majesty no pledge of any kind respecting it; for if, on being questioned in the House whether he had given any such pledge, he could not frankly deny it, 'all his power with respect to the management of

<sup>3</sup> MS. Diary of the Right Hon. H. Hobhouse.

<sup>4</sup> The word is hardly legible, being written over some other word erased, perhaps 'tricks.'

the measure would be gone.' <sup>5</sup> Peel also felt that Canning could not be asked for pledges which it would not be honourable to give. Neither did Peel think it right to accept the King's proffered personal guarantee, as against advice which might be tendered by his responsible Ministers. The negotiations therefore continued.

'Canning offered a proposition which originated with the King, that Peel should take a peerage and the lead of the House of Lords, which Peel peremptorily refused, as Canning expected. He endeavoured also to conciliate Peel by adverting to the state of his own health, and suggesting that the lead of the House of Commons had already from that cause devolved in a great degree on Peel, that it was likely to do so in a greater degree, and that if Canning's health should entirely fail, the premiership must pass to Peel. Peel stated the difficulty he felt to be this, that he could not honourably do or suffer anything which should advance the Catholic cause; that to put at the head of the Government so decided a promoter of that cause as Canning would of necessity advance the cause, and Peel could not acquiesce in it, more particularly in his present office, which he refused to change. They parted on the best terms, though with disappointment on Canning's part, and with a declaration that the conference should not be considered final.' <sup>6</sup>

On April 4 Canning writes: 'I saw the Duke of Wellington for a few minutes to-day, and he seemed to wish that we (you and I) should meet again to-morrow before the King's coming to town.' They met accordingly, and Canning writes:

'I have had another long talk with Peel, than which nothing could be more satisfactory as to manner and feeling. But the practical point, as to his own decision, remains just where it was, and I am confident will remain so until I can speak to him positively, not hypothetically.

'I have also had a few more words with the Duke, but equally without advance. My belief is that the Duke, and perhaps Peel too, hoped the explanation between me and the Duke would end in my begging him to take the Government.' <sup>7</sup>

The King came to town on the 5th, and on the 6th saw both Canning and Peel, but no progress was made. On the 9th, by the King's command, Canning again saw Peel, who came to propose the name of one whose appointment as First Minister he thought would solve all difficulties, the Duke of Wellington.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Stapleton's *Canning and his Times*, p. 185.

<sup>6</sup> Diary of the Right Hon. H. Hobhouse, April 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Canning and his Times*, p. 588. <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

But that solution did not commend itself to Canning, differing as he did from the Duke on foreign policy as well as on the Catholic question. On the same day Peel after a long talk with the Lord Chancellor, whose aid the King had invoked to promote a settlement, thus records his views.

*Mr. Peel to Lord Eldon.*

*(Most private.)*

Whitehall: April 9, 1827.

‘My earnest wish is to see the present Government retained in his Majesty’s service on the footing on which it stood at the time of Lord Liverpool’s misfortune.

‘I am content with my own position, and wish for no advancement or change. Differing on the Catholic question from every one of my colleagues in the Government who is a member of the House of Commons, still I have been enabled to act cordially with them, and much to my satisfaction, on other matters. I esteem and respect them, and should consider it a great misfortune were his Majesty to lose the services of any of them, and particularly of Canning. I can say with truth that on all matters of domestic and general policy (with the exception of the Catholic question) my opinions are in accordance with theirs.

‘In regarding the interests of the country and the position of the Government, I cannot confine my views to the Catholic question alone. Our differences on that question are a great evil, but they ought not to make us forget that on other subjects, some of not less importance (Parliamentary Reform, for instance), we are united. On the Catholic question the House of Commons recently divided, 276 to 272. Is not such a division an answer to those who demand a united Government either in favour of or in opposition to the Catholic claims?

‘You informed me that the King had mentioned to you yesterday that I feared I should have great difficulty in remaining in office if Canning were placed in the situation of Prime Minister. As the King has mentioned this to you, I may in writing to you now break that silence which

I have hitherto maintained on a subject of so much delicacy.

‘The difficulty to which his Majesty referred arises out of the Catholic question, and, I must say, out of that alone. If I agreed with Canning on that question, or if his opinions had been the same as Lord Liverpool’s, I should not have hesitated to remain in office, had his Majesty commanded Canning to form a Government, and had Canning proposed to me that I should form a part of it.

‘My own position with regard to the Catholic question, and with respect also to the particular duties which my office devolves upon me, is a peculiar one. I have for many years taken a leading part in the House of Commons in opposition to the Roman Catholic claims, and for the last five years (God knows, not without serious difficulty and embarrassment) I have filled that office which is mainly responsible for the administration of affairs in Ireland.

‘Can I see the influence of the office of Prime Minister transferred from Lord Liverpool to Canning, and added to that of leader of the House of Commons, without subjecting myself to misconstruction with respect to my views on the Catholic question? Can it be transferred without affecting my particular situation as Secretary for the Home Department, and my weight and efficiency in the administration of Irish affairs? It is with deep and unaffected regret that I answer these questions in the negative.

‘You will perceive at the same time that no small part of my difficulty is a peculiar and personal one. It arises partly from the very marked course I have taken on the Catholic question, partly from the particular office in which circumstances have placed me, and the particular relations in which I stand to Ireland and Irish affairs. Others of my colleagues who concur with me generally on the Catholic question, may not feel this difficulty. I will not seek, directly or indirectly, to influence their judgment.

‘My first wish is to see the present (perhaps I should rather say the late) Administration reconstituted precisely on the same footing on which it stood when Lord Liverpool

was at its head. If this be impossible, can it be constituted by Canning, I alone retiring? If it can, I should retire in perfect good humour, and without the slightest disappointment, though certainly not without regret.

‘I shall continue out of office to act upon the principles on which I have hitherto acted, and cannot but feel that, if the Government shall remain in the hands of my former colleagues, I shall be enabled, in conformity with those principles, to give it a general support.

‘I have written this in great haste, and as you are so soon to see his Majesty, I have hardly had time to read it over.

‘P.S.—I hope that I explained entirely to your own satisfaction the reason why I had not opened my lips to you on the subject of the present state of affairs as connected with the position of the Government until this morning.’

*Mr. Peel to Lord Eldon.*

‘Whitehall: April 9, 1827.

‘What I said with respect to a Protestant peer at the head of the Government was this: that if a peer of sufficient weight and influence could be found, whose general principles were in accordance with those of Lord Liverpool, the appointment of such a peer to be head of the Government would be quite unobjectionable to me, so far as I am personally concerned.

‘It might be difficult to find such a peer, because I think he ought to be a peer of name and character and ability also sufficient to sustain the part of Prime Minister.

‘I certainly did say to his Majesty that I could not advise the attempt to form an exclusive Protestant Government—that I could not be a party even to the attempt, should it be contemplated; but his Majesty was, I am confident, of the same opinion.

‘I said also that I was out of the question as the head of a Government under that arrangement which I consider by far the best that could be made, namely the reconsti-

tution of the late Administration, because it was quite impossible for Canning to acquiesce in my appointment.

'I wish to remain as I am, acting with him, he being leader of the House of Commons, with the just influence and authority of that station, subject, of course, to what I stated in my first letter.'

Three points were thus made clear: that Peel deemed it 'quite impossible' for Canning to serve under him; that on account of the Catholic question, and the Catholic question only, he had resolved not to serve under Canning as Prime Minister; but that he wished to act with him, Canning leading the House of Commons. One solution was to find a peer whom both could accept as head of the Administration. Failing that, Peel proposed to resign office, but to give a general support to Canning's Government, 'if in the hands of his former colleagues.' All this was laid by Lord Eldon before the King.

On the afternoon of the same day, April 9, Peel proposes to call on Canning at the Foreign Office. Canning replies: 'In half an hour, if that suits you;' but the King sending for Canning, the interview is put off till after 6 P.M. Next day, April 10, the King 'sends his very kind regards to Mr. Peel, and desires to see him at half-past one.' This interview failing to bring about an agreement, the King late on the same afternoon commissioned Canning to form an Administration.

His Majesty declared, at the same time, his determination not to admit the claims of the Roman Catholics, saying that on this point he relied on Mr. Canning's honour, and directing him to place Protestants in the offices of Home Secretary and of Viceroy of Ireland.<sup>9</sup>

It has been admitted by Mr. Canning that he was at this time in possession of an overture of support from Mr. Brougham, Sir Robert Wilson, and some other members of Opposition, which he did not disclose to any of his colleagues except Mr. Peel.<sup>1</sup>

Canning now, as time pressed, essayed to form a Government by personal interviews with the Lord Chancellor and with Peel, and by sending friends or writing to his other colleagues. To Peel he writes: 'April 10, 6 P.M. I am just returned from the King, and should be glad to see you if it suits you to call here.' And again at 7.45 P.M.: 'I have written to the Lord Chancellor to offer to call upon him at any hour this evening that may best suit his Lord-

<sup>9</sup> Hobhouse's Diary, April 14.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* May 12.

ship's convenience. I have not yet received his answer ; as soon as I do, I will let you know, or will call on you (unless I hear anything from you to the contrary) on my return from Hamilton Place.' When Canning did call, he said, 'I am afraid you are not prepared to give me any other answer than that which you have already given me.' Peel replied that 'he was not,' but did not give in his resignation. On April 11, 6.30 P.M., Canning writes : 'A constant worry and succession of conferences, and a summons to the King, so entirely absorbed my morning as to make it quite impossible for me to write to you, as I intended, to-day. I hope we meet at Wynn's.'

These notes show daily, and even hourly, intercourse between Peel and Canning of a frank and open nature throughout the crisis, which ended in their separation, solely on account of the Catholic question. On that point, having regard to their respective positions as the chief advocates of conflicting policies, neither would give way. But it is pleasing to note how, in contrast to the bitterness of meaner natures, the two great ministers parted with expressions of mutual deep regret, and with no breach of personal friendship.

*Mr. Canning to Mr. Peel.*

*(Private.)*

Foreign Office: April 15, 1827.

'My dear Peel,—I have been interrupted twenty times in my attempts to finish a letter to you which I began some days ago, and events have in the mean time followed each other so rapidly that great part of what I had written has become obsolete or unnecessary. I will therefore now confine myself to the repetition of what I have already so often expressed to you—my deep and sincere regret at the great public misfortune, and the severe individual loss to myself, of your retirement from office.

'The frankness and generosity with which you have defined and limited the motives that dictate your retirement afford to my regret all the alleviation of which it is susceptible. It is a pride as well as a comfort to me to know that, but for the point of honour which prevents your serving in any Government from the head of which you differ on the Catholic question, you would willingly have



continued to sit by my side in the House of Commons, and to share with me the defence of all those other great questions, and of all those principles of external and internal policy, with respect to all of which (with the single exception of that one question) we agree as entirely and as cordially as it is possible for any two individuals to agree in the concerns of political life.

‘Upon the point of honour on which you have acted, it is not for me to pronounce an opinion. But if it was good on one side, unquestionably it could not but be good on the other. I could not be expected to allow the opinion which I hold on the Catholic question to operate as a disqualification against me for a succession not otherwise disputed.

‘In truth, so far as you and I are concerned, the fault is in circumstances which neither of us could control, not in ourselves. I assure you as solemnly on my part as I believe implicitly on yours, that there is not a shade of personal estrangement in our official separation.

‘Neither is it any fault of mine that this separation is caused by your retirement rather than by mine. The only advice which I had tendered to his Majesty up to the period at which his Majesty was pleased to lay his commands upon me to form an Administration, was that his Majesty should endeavour to form one wholly composed of persons thinking with his Majesty (and with you) upon the question on which we unfortunately differ, advice involving obviously my own exclusion. As to the impossibility of acting on this advice I cannot presume to judge. I felt it to be my duty to offer the opportunity of doing so by putting myself absolutely out of the way.

‘Adieu, my dear Peel. I will relieve you as soon as I can from the labours of your office, which is the one that I find it most difficult to fill—no wonder, after such a predecessor.

‘Ever sincerely yours,

‘GEORGE CANNING.’

As early as in 1821 Canning had said that ‘there was as great a community of sentiment between Peel and himself as

could well subsist between public men. This statement is confirmed by Peel's reply, except as regards the Catholic question.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Canning.*

‘ Whitehall: April 17, 1827.

‘ My dear Canning,—The letter which I have received from you gives me the opportunity of recording, and indeed makes it necessary that I should record, the grounds on which I felt myself compelled to decline being a member of the Administration over which you are to preside as Prime Minister.

‘ I do not consider that my objections to remain in office resolve themselves merely into a point of honour. The grounds on which I decline office are public grounds, clear and intelligible, I think, to every man who has marked the course which I have pursued in Parliament on the Catholic question, and who understands the nature and the functions of the office which I have filled.

‘ For the period of eleven years I have been connected with the Administration over which Lord Liverpool presided. Six of those years I was Chief Secretary for Ireland, and for the remaining five Secretary of State for the Home Department. In each office I was in immediate contact with Irish affairs, and deeply responsible for their administration. During the whole of that period, indeed during the whole of my public career, I have taken a very active and prominent part in opposition to the Catholic claims, concurring in opinion and acting in unison with the head of the Government of which I was a member.

‘ Can I see the whole influence and authority of the office of Prime Minister transferred from Lord Liverpool to you without a conviction that the sanguine hopes of the Roman Catholics will be excited, and that the Catholic question will be practically and materially affected by the change?

‘ It is not merely that you differ from Lord Liverpool on the Catholic question. It is the extent of the difference which must be regarded. It is that the opinions avowed

by Lord Liverpool on the last occasion on which he had an opportunity of avowing them must be compared with those opinions which you have uniformly and so powerfully enforced. The transfer of the influence of Prime Minister from Lord Liverpool to you is the transfer of that influence from the most powerful opponent to the most powerful advocate of the Roman Catholic claims.

‘ If I were to be a party to the arrangement by accepting office under it, I should (always bearing in mind the particular situation in which I am placed) be subject to great misconstruction, and, in fact, should be lending myself to the advancement of a cause which under a different aspect of political affairs I had uniformly and strenuously resisted.

‘ My position as Minister for the Home Department, responsible in that capacity for the administration of Irish affairs, has long been one of considerable difficulty and embarrassment. I have been the only Minister of the Crown with a seat in the House of Commons taking a part in opposition to the Catholic claims, differing from all my colleagues who are members of that branch of the Legislature of which I am a member, on a question peculiarly affecting Ireland, and on the issue of which on the last occasion on which it was discussed depended my own relation to the Government.

‘ Whilst Lord Liverpool was head of the Government, I found material relief and assistance, because my opinions on that question, the only question on which I differed from my colleagues, were in concurrence with his. Is it not obvious that my efficiency and authority as a servant of the Crown must be materially impaired by an arrangement which transfers the highest and most powerful office from him with whom I entirely concurred to you, from whom it is my misfortune on that question to differ ?

‘ Such are the grounds on which, most reluctantly, but without hesitation, I felt myself compelled to relinquish office. Had your opinions on the Catholic question been in accordance with those of Lord Liverpool, I should have been perfectly willing to place my humble services at your

disposal, and to co-operate with you in the conduct of public business, with the same cordiality and good will with which I have hitherto acted in concert with you on all points save the one which now compels our separation.

‘That separation has caused me the deepest regret—regret which would be still more embittered if I were not conscious that I have done everything in my power to prevent the disunion which has taken place, everything at least consistent with a sense of public duty and the maintenance of my character as a public man.

‘Ever, my dear Canning,

‘Most sincerely yours,

‘ROBERT PEEL.’

During the crisis Mr. Peel had taken counsel only with himself, disclosing his intentions to no one but Canning and the King, and by the King’s command to the Duke of Wellington, and later to Lord Eldon. One other friend who wished to come and see him had met with no encouragement. Mr. Croker, as was his wont on such occasions, had gone to work at once to arrange who should be Prime Minister. By dinner-time on the evening of Lord Liverpool’s seizure, he had settled in his own mind that it must be Canning. At breakfast next day, he propounded this to the Duke of Wellington, who ‘seemed to assent,’ but asked whether Peel would agree to it, to which Croker replied ‘he ought; it is the course which will insure his becoming Minister in due time.’<sup>2</sup> A few weeks later, dining with Peel, Croker discovered that Peel did not take the same view of his duty; and on April 6, having been in conference with Canning, he began to feel uneasy as to how Peel would regard this, and writing to explain why he had hitherto stayed away, offered to come and talk the subject over ‘to him.’

‘It would be very vexatious to me,’ Mr. Croker writes. ‘to have it supposed that, because I happen to have had communications with Mr. Canning, and not to have had any with you, I had taken a part against all my private and personal friendships and affections. One thing I think it right to add, that I never gave any human being any reason to suppose that I could guess,<sup>3</sup> and still less that I knew your sentiments, and that, although I have heard things which I suspected were addressed to me as being

*Croker Papers*, i. 364.

How much he had guessed may be read in the *Croker Papers*, i. 365.

supposed to have some of your confidence, I always have treated all such matters (as you know, with perfect sincerity) as subjects on which you and I had no kind of communication.'

The offer was declined in terms politely severe, and the correspondence continued through twelve letters.

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

'Whitehall: April 7, 1827.

'Dear Croker,—The communications to which you refer in your note having taken place with Canning, I am very glad that you acted as you did act with reference to me, and abstained from all intercourse under present circumstances that could lead to explanations, with regard to the Government, or my own views personally on that subject. I think you acted judiciously in avoiding them.

'I shall be very happy to see you at any time, but do not wish to break our recent silence respecting the position of the Government and the country.

'Ever &c.

ROBERT PEEL.'

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'April 7, 1827.

'One word to explain. I did not stay away from you, as you seem to understand, because I had seen Mr. Canning; on the contrary, I stayed away although I had seen Mr. Canning, and although I might, perhaps ought, and probably was expected, to have told you all that passed between us; and I should have done so, but knowing the delicacy and reservedness of your disposition, and the difficulty and embarrassments of your situation, I thought I should most gratify you by resolving, as I did, not to intrude myself upon you, well assured that if you should, by any unexpected accident, want my presence, you would send for me; and that till then I had no business to thrust myself upon you. With Mr. Canning I had no difficulty of that nature, and having occasion to see him, I had no personal difficulty or delicacy about doing so.'

'April 10.—I have condemned myself to such entire ignorance of public affairs that I believe no man in the House of Commons can know so little as I do of what is said in the world, but I am, I confess, painfully anxious about all. Whenever you have decided, pray tell me.'

'April 18.—I was and am sorry that you could not see me on Friday morning.<sup>4</sup> Whenever you can spare me half an hour, I should be very anxious to avail myself of it.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

'Whitehall: April 18, 1827.

'Dear Croker,—As the events which have lately occurred are too important and too painful to permit me to think of other matters, and as I do not intend to open my lips to you with respect to those events, I doubt whether an interview under present circumstances could give to either of us the least satisfaction.

'I am very truly yours,

'ROBERT PEEL.'

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'April 18, 1827.

'[After detailed explanation.] This, my dear Peel, is a succinct but true and candid statement of my conduct, from the day of Lord Liverpool's seizure till the hour of my conversation with Mr. Canning last Saturday. I never during all that time spoke a word or did any act that was not consistent with and generally prompted by my affection for you. I neither procured nor attempted to procure Mr. Canning any support, nor did I in any way talk or act differently from what I should have done had you been near enough to see or hear me. This, I think, will satisfy a mind and a heart like yours; and if these unfortunate events are to divide us, I hope at least that you will discard from your thoughts all the imputations which I have too

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Croker had asked to see Mr. Peel before consenting to retain office under Mr. Canning.

much reason to suppose have been thrown upon me, as having been wanting in friendship and affection towards you. I have not failed in either of these particulars. I trust to your candour that if I have left unexplained any point which you may have heard differently represented, you will question me upon it, and that if I have explained all to your satisfaction, you will return to as cordial a state of private regard as we before had, when formerly you were, as now, out of office while I was in. I know that friendship is in this country impaired too often by party, but we are not yet, I hope, in opposite parties, and at all events nothing has impaired my personal love for you, while all that I hear raises my admiration of your honour, candour, and political integrity.'

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

'Whitehall: Wednesday evening [April 19, 1827].

'Dear Croker,—It is far from my wish to say anything which can give pain to a person with whom I was so recently in the habits of very confidential intercourse. As I must, however, send some reply to your letter, I have no alternative but to state that it has not removed the impressions under which I declined an interview with you that might lead to any communication between us as to what has lately taken place.

'I am very faithfully yours,

'ROBERT PEEL.'

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

'April 20, 1827.

'Dear Peel,—If you will not do me the justice of letting me know what impression, or on what point, you allude to, I can only repeat my general assertion that such an impression must be utterly erroneous, and that (up to my consenting on Friday to continue in office) I had not deviated in word or deed from the truest and most anxious friendship towards you. I deeply lament this interruption to our

cordiality; but as truth can never be long concealed, I do not despair of its removal in better times.

‘Yours ever,

‘J. W. CROKER.’

After the lapse of almost half a year, Mr. Croker, in whom the younger statesman seems to have inspired a strong sentiment of affectionate attachment, found the interruption of intercourse so painful that he could no longer refrain from making another effort to terminate it, in a different tone, which met with more success.

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

‘Admiralty: Oct. 1, 1827.

‘Do make me happy by a return to our former intercourse. You know how little politics had to do with it, and you must feel that it was yourself, your wife, and your dear children that attracted me to your house. I feel that attraction as strongly as ever, and I am not ashamed to say that in losing the domestic intercourse which I enjoyed with you I lose that which, next to the affections of my own wife and Nony [his adopted daughter], is dearest to my heart. I offer you any explanations you may wish for. I offer myself without any explanations, if, as is possible, you think explanations unsatisfactory.

‘I need hardly say that there is no man in the world but yourself towards whom I would take this step, nor could I towards you if I could imagine any solid reason why it should not be successful. I remember the terms of your last note to me, and I will therefore spare you the pain of a negative reply. If I do not hear from you, I shall understand your silence; but wrong as undoubtedly I shall in that case think you, I do not believe that it will make any change in the affection which I bear to you and yours.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. Croker.*

‘Drayton Manor: Oct. 3, 1827.

‘The suspension of my intercourse with you was caused by the part which I had reason to believe you were taking



in those arrangements which were connected with the dissolution of the late Government. In consequence of unreserved communications with you, you were in possession of my opinions and my fixed intentions in certain contingencies, and I certainly think that under all the circumstances I might have expected from you at least a total abstinence from any interference, direct or indirect, in what was passing at the time of which I speak.

‘ Mr. Canning declared to more than one person that there was no one to whom he was so much indebted for suggestions as to the course which he should pursue as he was to you. Such an avowal by him, or, indeed, the fact of your being in confidential communication with him at the period in question, was a sufficient reason for my declining to hold any intercourse with you on matters of a public nature.

‘ I am perfectly ready to bury in complete oblivion the causes of misunderstanding and alienation, and it is clear that nothing can more contribute to this—particularly considering the relations in which we respectively stand to the present Government—than a total oblivion, when we meet, of politics also.

‘ Believe me, my dear Croker,

‘ Ever very faithfully yours,

‘ ROBERT PEEL.’

This reconciliation, limited though it was and cold, gave Mr. Croker ‘ the sincerest pleasure ; ’ but in disregard of the last hint, he persevered in citing ‘ proofs ’ of his loyalty, one of which shows that he had reckoned on Canning’s shortly making way for Peel.

*Mr. Croker to Mr. Peel.*

‘ Oct. 4, 1827.

‘ Lord Hertford will tell you that, after my first interview with Canning, I told him I was convinced that he would never complete a second session as leader of the House of Commons ; and I thought it my duty to you, and to our party, and to the country, to contribute my efforts

(small as they must be) that you should be in the same position to Mr. Canning that he had been to Lord Liverpool; and that was the expression I used at the time to Mr. Canning himself.

‘I may now confess to you more fully than before that the pain I felt at our separation was greater than I imagined anything, short of a fatal domestic calamity, could have created. It broke my rest and mixed with my dreams. I was not before aware of the full extent of my affection for you. I shall never be thoroughly happy till I can satisfy myself that you have admitted me *ad eundem* into your entire friendship.’

As soon as Mr. Peel was at liberty to do so, he made known the fact of his resignation, and his reasons for it, to his father, to his friend and colleague Mr. Robinson, and to Bishop Lloyd, each of whom in his own way expressed approval; the Bishop, however, dreading the consequences if Peel’s unequivocal agreement with Canning on all questions but one should be disclosed in Oxford.

*Mr. Peel to Sir Robert Peel.*

‘Whitehall: April 12, 1827.

‘My dear Father,—On Monday evening [April 9] the King sent for Mr. Canning and desired him to form an Administration, of which he (Mr. Canning) was to be at the head. Mr. Canning called upon me, and expressed a hope that I should be enabled to continue in office under such an arrangement.

‘With great regret I was obliged to inform him that I could not &c. [as in the letter to Canning].

‘I told Canning that I acted in this without concert with others, that I felt my situation a peculiar one, that I should attempt to influence no one else, should retire in perfect good humour, and continue out of office to support the same principles on which I had always acted. I expressed great and sincere regret at this separation from many of my colleagues, with whom on other matters besides the

Catholic question I concurred, and for whom I still entertain great respect and regard.

‘I am entirely satisfied with my decision, because I could not have taken any other which I could have reconciled to my own feelings.

‘I doubt whether the Duke of Wellington will remain in the Cabinet, and probably others of my colleagues will follow his example. I act, however, for myself, and on my own impressions of what it is becoming for me to do.

‘I am &c.

‘ROBERT PEEL.’

*Sir Robert Peel to Mr. Peel.*

‘Drayton: April 14, 1827.

‘My dear Robert,—I lament the circumstance that induced you to withdraw yourself from the service of his Majesty.

‘With the opinion I entertain of your good sense and prudence, I am led to believe you acted right.

‘From your time of life, and the measures you pursued to the satisfaction of the public at large, my strong wish is that you may not continue long a private individual.

‘My best love to Julia and children.

‘Yours affectionately,

‘ROBERT PEEL.’

*Mr. Peel to the Hon. F. Robinson.*

‘Whitehall: April 12, 1827.

‘Will you be so kind as to read the inclosed letters, which I wrote to the Chancellor on Monday last, he having been commissioned by the King to call upon me, and to report to the King the result of his conversation with me? Do not make a single comment in returning them to me. It would be a satisfaction to me that you should read them.

‘My retirement from office would have nothing half so painful in it as the interruption of that cordial regard and

esteem which I believe we have mutually felt for each other, which I am sure I shall ever feel for you.'

*The Hon. F. Robinson to Mr. Peel.*

'Downing Street: April 13, 1827.

'I cannot return you the papers which you have sent me without a few lines. First, I must thank you for allowing me to read them; and secondly, I cannot forbear to assure you that I have felt throughout this sad business the peculiarity of your situation, and the difficulty in which it involved you. And I am bound in justice to you to say that in my opinion your conduct has been consistent, manly, and honourable, such as I should always have expected from you, and such as must insure to you from me a cordial continuance of that esteem and regard which a connection of many years had established.

'For myself, I must say, that having no personal or political reason for objecting to act under Canning, I could not reconcile it to a sense of duty and gratitude to the King to decline acquiescing in the invitation which his Majesty had authorised him to make to his former colleagues; and although the secession of so many of them has placed me in a situation most distressing, I cannot bring myself to add to the King's embarrassment by retracting my acquiescence.

'God knows I am not influenced by any personal motives whatever. Had I consulted nothing but my own wishes and my domestic comfort and happiness, I should have been out of office when Parliament reassembled in February; but when I expressed to Lord Liverpool in December last my anxiety to be relieved from my situation in the House of Commons (for reasons which I certainly cannot expect others to enter into), I ceased to press my wishes, upon his earnest representation<sup>5</sup> that any change in my situation would infallibly precipitate a crisis, the approach of which he then foresaw. I yielded to the representation in order

<sup>5</sup> The letters are given in Yonge's *Life of Lord Liverpool*.

to avoid embarrassment either to the King or to my colleagues ; but I told him at the same time that my wishes were the same, and if at the end of this session he should not have found himself enabled to make any arrangement such as I sought, I should necessarily have retired—a step which I should have taken without a moment's regret, as far as regarded myself individually.

‘To me, therefore, the present state of things is nothing but a source of unqualified pain, which nothing could enable me to support but a consciousness that I have done my duty honestly, and have in no way contributed to produce events so complicated, embarrassing, and painful.

‘Believe me, my dear Peel, with every feeling of sincere regard,

‘Most truly yours,

‘F. ROBINSON.’

*Bishop Lloyd to Mr. Peel.*

‘Cuddesden : April 13, 1827.

‘Your letter came upon me most unexpectedly ; I was quite unprepared for the result. I did not conceive that the King would have consented to any such arrangement. Otherwise, if I had been guided only by my own opinion of the new Minister, I might have expected everything that has happened.

‘I will not tell you that I am not sorry, for I am so on many accounts ; yet if the arrangement which I expected had taken place, I should not have been satisfied. I thought that Canning would have been Prime Minister with your consent. I was not prepared to like the arrangement, but it would not have been possible to find fault with the feelings that had dictated your conduct.

‘But what in the name of wonder is the Administration to consist of ? The game that Canning has been playing for the last two years could not escape the observation even of a fool. He has been playing into the hands of the Whigs, and receiving their support and continual applause.

Does he bring in Lord Lansdowne and old Tierney, or how is it to be settled ?

‘ Lord Mansfield was staying with the Dean a short time ago, and said “ that Peel ought to separate himself entirely from Canning, that he was losing ground among the country gentlemen by sticking to him ; ” and so, I conceive, the step you have taken will meet with their approbation.

‘ I think, on the ground you state to me, that you have done right. If the circumstance of your remaining in office could have exposed you to the imputation of allowing the Catholic question to pass—if it could have made your opposition appear only a nominal opposition for the sake of consistency—your character would assuredly have suffered. All I hope is that you have not lent Canning a helping hand to be where he is.’

*April 22.*—It has not been my habit for many years to doubt of the perfection of your judgment, and the correctness of the view which you have taken of public life. But my hope and, to say the truth, my full expectation had been that you would have been the individual called upon to form an Administration, as being, beyond all question, the man and the only man to whom the country is prepared to give its unqualified confidence. I do not say that my wish had been that you should have accepted the office of Prime Minister, for the conjuncture of public affairs appeared to me so perilous and full of difficulties. You would have had to contend with such envy and jealousy that I trembled at the danger. The plan which, on the whole, I should have preferred, would have been that Lord Bathurst (as was reported) should have been placed at the head of the Ministry to keep you all together, when in two or three years you would have walked naturally into your place. And it was not without a strong feeling of indignation that I saw you compelled to resign in consequence of the preferment of a man with whom I will not do you the dishonour to compare you.

‘ I have been in the habit for some years of feeling with no small anxiety the pulse of public opinion in regard to

you. I have found you every year rising higher and higher in the estimation of all good men, and when I was in town last month you were on the highest pinnacle of England's good opinion. Knowing this and feeling it, could I see without regret that you were thrown into circumstances in which the progress of your career might possibly be stopped? Observe that when I received your letter on Good Friday, I had seen no newspaper, and had no notion of so many other members of the Ministry sending in their resignation. I would not for a single moment have entertained the idea of your remaining in office unless you had been certain of all the rest remaining with you.

‘So much for that. Now for my reasons for not placing your letter in the hands of the Dean and others. That I may not deal in ambiguities, I will say plainly that I am unwilling to do anything which may, even by possibility, create a feeling in the University in favour of Canning, and I think the two letters would tend to produce this. The sentence of which I am afraid is that which both in Canning's letter and yours asserts *an entire union of opinion on all public questions* except one. Now this is the very thing which Lord Mansfield and others were finding fault with, because there were many points on which they did not wish you to agree with Canning. A great part of the Academical body, on the contrary, being composed of young men full of enthusiasm and warm feeling, would seize upon this sentence with avidity, and arguing from it that Mr. Peel in all the great questions of external and internal policy considered Mr. Canning a safe administrator of the country's affairs, would, from the very circumstance of your approbation (however qualified by the Catholic question), raise their admiration of Canning, and his party would be infinitely increased. Now this is the last circumstance which I wish to happen. I wish you, both for the sake of policy and truth, to be considered both in and out of the University as a liberal man, but I hold it to be one thing to be a man of liberal opinions, and another to be an admirer and approver of all Canning's measures. There is no man, I

suppose, who is acquainted even with the elements of these things, who does not approve of the principles from which these measures flow. But, if Aristotle is to be believed, the circumstances of time and place and manner, with the other predicaments of action, constitute the tests by which any practical measure is to be tried. I am well convinced that if these measures had originated with you, you would have carried them into effect in a much more statesmanlike manner, and with much less convulsion to the country, and I am, therefore, not prepared to show even to Smith or Gaisford any letters which appear to contain an unequivocal approbation of Canning on all questions but one.

‘I would rather advise that you should write to the Dean, telling him that you think it due to him and to yourself that he should know the exact grounds on which you retired from office, and then giving the substance of your letter to Canning, and concluding with saying (as you say to Canning) that had it not been for the Catholic question you should have been very “willing to place your humble services at Canning’s disposal.” I think so much would do good; more might, in my opinion, possibly do harm.

‘You know my opinion of Canning. It has never varied for many years, and I have stated it in the University with tolerable openness and freedom. But I have always taken care to add that I was only speaking my own opinion, and it is clearly sufficiently understood that you have a much better opinion of him than many among us. But having the opinion of Canning that I have, I cannot, without a little more consideration, allow it to be circulated that you agree with him on every question but one. This question, I again affirm most solemnly, had nothing whatever to do with his rejection in the year 1817; and although the opinions of Oxford are at this moment very strong on the Catholic question, yet I would not answer for what might happen to Mr. Estcourt<sup>6</sup> in case of a dissolution, if it were once known on good authority that you agreed with Canning on every other matter of public interest and importance.

<sup>6</sup> Peel’s colleague in representing the University.



‘Such are my feelings and opinions; and entertaining them as strongly as I do, I thought it better to lay them before you. If you should think my views of danger visionary, or if you should have any reason with which I am unacquainted for wishing people to know that you agree with Canning as much as the letters seem to say, only notify the same to me, and I will immediately act without hesitation, and with the most undoubting reliance on your better judgment.’

The feeling in the country and in the House of Commons, in regard to the position taken up by Mr. Peel, appears in letters from several friends.

*Sir John Beckett, M.P., to Mr. Peel.*

‘(Private.)

‘Somerby Park, Gainsborough : April 11, 1827.

‘Canning’s friends in the country are arguing for the reasonableness of allowing him to succeed Lord Liverpool, leaving the Catholic question to be debated and dealt with as it has been hitherto; that is, he and every man taking his own line upon it. But I wish to warn you that there would be a very strong feeling prejudicial to yourself and those who think with you, if you consented to Mr. Canning being Premier leaving the Catholic question open, and, indeed, without coming to some very precise conditions in the shape of restrictions as to the course he shall be at liberty to pursue.

‘The anti-Catholic party quite dread the notion of a Catholic advocate being Premier, with the Treasury patronage at his disposal, and they rely on those whom they have supported upon this vital question for protection in the present crisis.’

*Lord Hotham (M.P. for the East Riding) to Mr. Peel.*

‘36 Davies Street : April 12, 1827.

‘I cannot deny myself the pleasure of assuring you that the step which I understand you to have taken

fully justifies the high opinion of your integrity which I have always been disposed to entertain. I do not attach any value to my own opinion, nor do I imagine that the expression of it can be of any consequence to you. Still, however, it cannot be altogether uninteresting to you to know the sentiments of those who have been more particularly in the habit of reposing confidence in your judgment.'

*Mr. Dawson to Mr. Peel.*

' April 13, 1827.

' It was impossible to conceive anything more honourable to your public and private character, or more gratifying to the feelings of everyone connected with you, than the manner in which the communication of your retirement from office was received yesterday in the House of Commons. The expression of deep and sincere sorrow was visible in every countenance, and it was openly lamented by members from all sides of the House as a national disaster. I assure you that very many addressed me with tears in their eyes.'

Popular feeling meanwhile ran strongly in favour of Canning, and while Peel himself was generally acquitted of unworthy motives, his colleagues who resigned were sharply condemned, especially the Duke of Wellington for throwing up the command of the army. The Duke's defence was made later in the House of Lords, and more fully in a memorandum published with his correspondence. But before Parliament met he was so roughly handled by the newspapers as to distress his friends, who induced Mr. Peel to recommend an earlier public statement.

*Mr. Arbuthnot to Mr. Peel.*

' April 17, 1827.

' It has occurred to me that Street, who used to conduct the "Courier," might be most useful if we look to the Press, and this must be done, unless we are to abandon the whole game. What I am anxious about is that the Duke should be justified and set right with the world. There is a great disposition to find fault with his abandonment of the army.'

*Mrs. Arbuthnot to Mr. Peel.*

‘April 19, 1827.

‘We are both of us in a fury about the Press, and at the shameless abuse of the Duke. It is really too bad, and I do hope some steps will be taken to get us at least one paper. They are so artfully trying to separate you from all the others, that I imagine they will renew their attempts to induce you to return. We hear the Home Department quite goes begging,<sup>7</sup> even Mr. Wallace refusing. It would have been more to the honour of Lord Anglesey if the Ordnance had equally gone begging. I think it inexpressibly dirty of him to accept it. Pray try to do something about the Press.’

*Mr. Peel to the Duke of Wellington.*

‘Whitehall : April 22, 1827.

‘I have a strong impression that the time has come when you should make known the grounds on which you gave up the Cabinet and the office of Commander-in-Chief.

‘The Press is all on one side. That would signify very little if it were not for the time that must elapse before the effect of the Press can be counteracted by any statement in Parliament. In the interval of ten days there may be some new wonder which will have drawn the public attention away from the old one. The impression made will not only be too deep to be effaced, but the world will be sick of the subject and indifferent about explanation. Canning is stating to everyone the whole of the story, including the first communications with the King, the message to the Cabinet &c. Do consider whether a temperate and dignified statement, containing, however, the whole of the transaction, ought not to be prepared immediately by you, professedly for your friends, but really for the public. I would include every letter in that statement.’

<sup>7</sup> It was refused by the Speaker, by Lord Farnborough, and by Mr. Wallace.

*The Duke of Wellington to Mr. Peel.*

‘Strathfieldsaye: April 22, 1827.

‘I return the correspondence with Croker. In respect to a statement from me, it must be confined to the contents of four letters, two from Mr. Canning and two from me. Mr. Canning may, but I cannot, enter into the detail of conversations with the King, or rather supposed conversations. Whatever may be the consequence then, I am for leaving the case where it is.

‘I never had any concern with newspapers. I hate the whole tribe of news-writers, and I prefer to suffer from their falsehoods to dirtying my fingers with communications with them. I may be wrong, but I have always acted upon this principle, and I have generally found that it succeeded at last.’

Mr. Peel relieved his own feelings at this time by writing freely to his brother Edmund, and to a highly esteemed friend, whose approval had been very gratifying to him.

*The Right Hon. Robert Peel to Edmund Peel, Esq.*

‘Whitehall: April 21, 1827.

‘My dear Edmund,—I can truly say, that amidst the excitement of the last three weeks I have known no pleasure greater than that which the letters I have this morning received from you and Eden<sup>8</sup> have given me.

‘I have acted for myself upon the impulse of feelings which in certain cases are better guides than the advice of others, or the cold calculations of reason. It is still a true satisfaction to find the course pursued in critical times from a sense of honour approved by men of acute understandings and spotless integrity.

‘My whole course was this. From the first I said to the King and to Mr. Canning, “I am acting in concert with no one. I know nothing of the opinions and intentions of

<sup>8</sup> Henley Eden, a Christ Church friend.

others. I am content with my position in the Government, and willing to retain it—willing to see Mr. Canning leader of the House of Commons as he has been. But, giving him credit for honesty and sincerity, if he is at the head of the Government, and has all the patronage of the Government, he must exert himself as an honest man to carry the Catholic question; and to the carrying of that question, to the preparation for its being carried, I never can be a party, still less can I be a party to it for the sake of office.

“Put any Protestant peer of character at the head of the Government, let things remain as they were when Lord Liverpool was Prime Minister, that is under the very arrangement in which Mr. Canning has acquiesced for the last four years, I am perfectly satisfied.”

“Mr. Canning’s declaration was in substance, “I will be head of the Government or nothing.” Mine was, “I am content with things as they are; but if you are head of the Government, I will not act under you.”

“The peerage and the lead in the House of Lords, a change from the Home Department to the Foreign Office, were proposed to me; in short, anything. But what is anything as a compensation for the sacrifice of what is essential (or what a man feels to be essential, for there is no difference) to his own honour and character?”

“I do not choose to see new lights on the Catholic question precisely at that conjuncture when the Duke of York has been laid in his grave and Lord Liverpool is struck dumb by the palsy. Would any man, woman, or child believe that after nineteen years’ stubborn unbelief I was converted, at the very moment Mr. Canning was made Prime Minister, out of pure conscience and the force of truth?”

“Besides this, I hold the very office which not only connects me with Ireland, but requires the signature of my hand to every peerage, every bishopric, every deanery, every ecclesiastical preferment in the gift of the Crown, every political office: not one of these can pass without my name to the warrant; I mean, of course, the name of the

Secretary of State for the Home Department. The same observation applies to all Irish Church preferment. In the eye of the law and Constitution I am the person responsible for the propriety of each appointment, and yet by long usage every one of these appointments is practically under the Prime Minister. How could a Prime Minister and a Home Secretary differing on the most important domestic question to the extent to which Canning and I differ (the extent of our difference, the prominent parts we have acted, make the difficulty)—how could they hope to act cordially, one having to sign everything which the other gave away?

‘All the stories of cabal against the King are utter falsehoods. I opened my mind not to the Chancellor, not to Lord Bathurst, but to the King and Mr. Canning. They acted with full notice of my feelings and determination, and I kept aloof from others in the hope that I might be enabled by doing so to keep the late Government together.

‘I have written this immediately after the receipt of your letter; it will be some proof to you that I feel the real kindness of it. Pray show it to Eden, and to John, and read it to my father. I should be very sorry if he could think I had acted in so important a matter from pique, or levity, or personal jealousy. I feel, however, a firm conviction that he would rather see me, as I am, in a private station with a tranquil mind, and the name I inherit from him unspotted, than if I had tarnished that name for the sake of power, or abandoned it for a discreditable peerage.

‘Ever &c.

‘ROBERT PEEL.’

*Mr. Peel to Mr. W. Hulston.*

‘Whitehall: April 23, 1827.

‘If I wanted any consolation for making a sacrifice which I considered indispensable to my honour and character as a public man, your letter—the letter of one whom I have always named as the best example of an English gentleman—would amply supply it.

‘ You will, I trust, have disbelieved, as we have hitherto disregarded, the shameless falsehoods which have been circulated about cabals and dictation to the King. If we had acted with concert we should probably have managed appearances better ; I acted on a view of my own position without communication with others, giving full notice, however, to his Majesty and to Mr. Canning that the appointment of Mr. Canning to be Prime Minister must inevitably compel my retirement. The prompt and generous assurances of your continued esteem have induced me to enter into this explanation. Thank God it is an explanation rendered necessary (if it be necessary) by my going out of office, and not by remaining in.’

On May 1, three weeks after the first resignations, Parliament met, and Mr. Peel rose to vindicate the course he had pursued. Like the Duke of Wellington, he had till then abstained from making public the motives of his conduct. In his speech there were a few points that are not in the letters. He observed that he would probably have been the only Minister who was likely to continue opposed to the Catholic claims ; that he could never have thought of trying to pledge Mr. Canning not to press them, and had they been pressed, he, like Mr. Canning in 1812, could not have been content to divest himself of influence and authority, and retain only the power of making his solitary speech and giving his solitary vote ; that he had acted in accordance with Mr. Canning’s own example, an example he honoured, an example that ought to be set or followed by every public man.

Canning replied in a tone even more courteous and kind. ‘ I can bear testimony,’ he said, ‘ that throughout the whole of the discussions I have kept up with my right honourable friend the most constant and confidential intercourse, and throughout I have found in him the same candour and sincerity, and the expression of the same just feelings, and a uniform exhibition of the same high principle, to which he has laid claim. From the beginning of these discussions I foresaw—both of us foresaw—that they must terminate in a separation, which I hope to God may be only for a time.’

Later in his speech, however, Mr. Canning dwelt significantly on the ‘ strange coincidence ’ by which six resignations had been handed to him at once. In reply to this Mr. Peel, in defence of his colleagues rather than of himself, pledged his

honour that the letters had not been concerted. In fact, Peel, the Duke of Wellington, and Lord Eldon had resigned on the 11th, and Lord Westmorland on the same evening; the other two peers wrote next day, when they discovered that their colleagues were going, or gone.

*Lord Bathurst to Mr. Canning.*

‘Downing Street: April 12, 1827.

‘Since I saw you yesterday morning I find that the Duke of Wellington, Mr. Peel, Lord Westmorland, and (as I understand) the Chancellor after having delivered his judgments, intend to give in their resignations. Under these circumstances I can no longer withhold mine.

‘It is not necessary to enter into any reasons for coming to this decision. I think upon consideration it is better to avoid anything which can lead to discussion, as it is too apt on these occasions to widen the breach which the separation must in some measure effect.’

*Lord Melville to Mr. Peel.*

‘Admiralty: April 30, 1827.

‘About noon on Wednesday, the 11th, Huskisson proposed that I should go to Canning and give him my answer in person. I accordingly went and had a full conversation with him. I left him with the impression that you would probably decline to belong to the new Administration, but that all the rest would continue, and I am bound in fairness to state that if this had been the case, particularly in regard to the Duke of Wellington and Lord Bathurst, I should not have declined.’

(*Inclosure.*)

*Lord Melville to Mr. Canning.*

‘Admiralty: April 12, 1827.

‘I told you yesterday that, as far as I was individually concerned, I should willingly contribute my assistance in the Administration which his Majesty had directed you to



form, provided you could keep Lord Liverpool's Government together.

'Until I saw you yesterday, and with the exception of a short interview with Huskisson on the preceding evening, I had not communicated on anything relating to the formation of a new Administration with any of our colleagues. I have only to-day learnt that the separation is to an extent of which I was not before aware, and I really feel that I could not do justice to your Government if I were to continue in office. I regret this result most sincerely and deeply.'

Though Lord Melville did not know the intentions of his colleagues, Mr. Peel knew, contingently, Lord Melville's. Mr. Arbuthnot writes :

'Fife House : Saturday night, 10 o'clock [April 7, 1827?].

'When I left your house Lord Melville begged I would call upon him. I did so. He told me that he had long wished to say to you, and he now said to me, that notwithstanding his opinion on the Catholic question he never would belong to any Government which Canning might ever wish to form, to the exclusion of his Protestant colleagues.'

Mr. Hobhouse writes : 'The retirement of the Chancellor and the Duke's relinquishment of the Cabinet were not unexpected, but his abandonment of his military command was wholly unlooked for. As much so were the resignations of Lord Bathurst, Lord Westmorland, Lord Bexley, and particularly of Lord Melville, whose opinions on the Catholic question coincided with Canning's. The Chancellor was the only one of the seceders who tendered his resignation personally to the King, and with him the King was extremely angry and vehement, and refused to allow him three weeks to finish his decrees.'<sup>9</sup>

'The first step which Canning had taken was to make the Duke of Clarence Lord High Admiral. Of this his friends boasted as a *coup de maitre*, inasmuch as it at once shut the door against Lord Melville's return, and so punished him, and conciliated the Duke (who had lately expressed himself very con-

<sup>9</sup> MS. Diary, April 14. Lord Bexley was induced to remain.

temptuously of Canning) both as Heir Presumptive and as future Sovereign. The appointment is said to have been suggested by Croker. H.R.H. evinced his gratitude by immediately appointing Croker his Secretary.'<sup>1</sup>

Canning himself, while feeling keenly and commenting severely on the unkindness at this time of other colleagues, spoke always in a different tone of Peel. To this, when some twenty years later it was called in question, Canning's friend Mr. Lushington bore emphatic witness.

*Memorandum by the Right Hon. S. R. Lushington.*

'London: June 16, 1846.

'I remember, as if the words had been just spoken to me by Mr. Canning, with what warmth and eloquence he eulogised Sir Robert Peel for his generous and noble conduct to him in 1827, and with what feeling he spoke of the unkindness of those colleagues who had recently urged the necessity of his remaining in England and giving up the Government of India, and then acted so bitterly against him and the King's wishes in his favour. But he reprobated most indignantly those who had always concurred with him in supporting the Catholic claims, and yet now deserted and turned against him. He said he could not expect Peel, the leader of the Protestant opinions in the House of Commons, and M.P. for the University of Oxford, to take a subordinate place in an Administration of which the Prime Minister had been a constant and avowed champion of the Catholic claims, but Peel had told him kindly and liberally that he would support his Government in other respects warmly and sincerely, and with this assurance he was perfectly and gratefully satisfied.

'I have written this after carefully reading and meditating upon the oath I took when Mr. Canning recommended me to be made a Privy Councillor, and I feel it my duty to the Crown, to Mr. Canning, and to Sir Robert Peel to make this declaration, the truth and accuracy of which is

<sup>1</sup> Diary of the Right Hon. H. Hobhouse, April 21.

from very peculiar circumstances indelibly engraved on my memory.'

During the rest of the session the controversies in Parliament were full of rancour. Mr. Peel took little part in them. On May 3 (two days after his own explanation) he pressed to know on what principles the Whigs had entered into coalition with Mr. Canning, as to Parliamentary Reform, as to repeal of the Test Acts, and still more as to Catholic Relief. This speech being resented by Mr. Canning as an insinuation that he was departing from his principles on Parliamentary Reform and the Relaxation of Tests, both of which he declared his intention to oppose, Mr. Peel explained that he had been misunderstood. He was satisfied, and had meant to imply, that Mr. Canning intended to adhere to his principles; but he, in the interests of the Established Church, could not express confidence in the Administration until he knew on what principle the Whigs who had taken office had joined it. A week later he admitted that Mr. Canning had explained the terms of the coalition in a satisfactory manner, and disclaimed the intention of giving anything like a factious opposition. And in June, while defending the Duke of Wellington from the charge of factious conduct in having amended the Corn Bill in the Upper House, which had led to its abandonment, he himself seconded Mr. Canning in forthwith reaffirming the policy of the Bill.

Overtly Canning was supported by the Whigs, but he seems to have been worried behind the scenes by them almost as much as in public by his former colleagues.

*Mr. Arbuthnot to Mr. Peel.*

Whitehall Place: July 6, 1827.

'I have heard both from Holmes and from Herries that the exactions of the Whigs drive Canning nearly out of his senses. He said very recently that the Whigs had better beware, that he was clinging to the tree (i.e. the King), but that they were only hanging to his feet. Holmes told me that the Whigs up to the very last day would not consent to receive Treasury notes, and that they never would attend unless they were summoned by Lord Duncannon. Herries says that Canning and the Whigs are as far asunder as pole from pole, that Canning's time is spent in resisting

their encroachments, that of these encroachments even Huskisson now complains bitterly, that Planta<sup>2</sup> is in despair, and that in short the two parties are so at variance that sooner or later they must split and break to pieces.

‘The worst thing for Canning is that he is as changeable as the wind that blows. Of course he hates the seceders; but just at this moment he has not time to think of them, the whole wrath of his soul being directed against Lord Grey. I forget whether I told you that for an instant he had resolved to take a peerage, that he might meet Lord Grey in the Lords, and there combat him.

‘I believe it is now positively settled that Lord Anglesey is to go to Ireland. Lord Wellesley, however, is to stay there till Christmas, it having been his earnest entreaty (on account of his money affairs) that he may be left where he is half a year longer, and before that time has elapsed Canning may have come to the determination of abolishing the Lord-Lieutenancy. This has certainly been one of his recent projects.

‘Whatever may be his difficulties—whether they are to destroy him, or he to surmount them—there is not, you may be assured, a man who does not feel that he has not a grain of common judgment. Planta is more impressed with this than anyone. I had occasion to see him yesterday, and in the course of conversation he burst forth and exclaimed, “My dear Mr. Arbuthnot, who will ever be able to give judgment to Mr. Canning? He will take the advice of one person to-day, of another to-morrow, and on the next day of a third.”

‘Of the King I know nothing except that he will not see the Whigs, and that he hates them (as I am told) as much as ever.’

‘*July 27.*—There now is an attempt to get the Duke to resume the command unconditionally and without expecting an apology from Canning. But the Duke has written a short and clear and very strong memorandum, declaring once for all that he will not take the command until the Minister

<sup>2</sup> Canning's Under Secretary at the Foreign Office.

makes an apology as ample and as public as was the offence.<sup>3</sup> Lady Conyngham said that she hoped the Duke would take the command immediately, for the new arrangement under Sir G. Murray was ready for signature, and if once carried into effect could not be got rid of. All this is humbug, but they now can less than ever have any influence with the Duke, as he perfectly loathes their shabby baseness.'

As regards the relations between Canning and Peel, the testimony of Canning's private secretary (himself no partial judge of Peel) is valuable. He writes: 'No suspicion ever crossed Mr. Canning's mind that there was any want of sincerity in the reasons assigned by Mr. Peel for his retirement. He had never stood as a rival in Mr. Canning's path, who always looked to him as his successor. More than once he said to me: "I grieve at Peel's decision: had we only gone on together for a short time, my succession must have fallen to him."' When Sir William Knighton said to Canning that 'Peel would go out on account of Oxford,' Canning replied, 'God forbid, for he is certainly the most efficient Secretary of State for the Home Department that this country ever saw, and the most able and honest minister.'

There was no personal estrangement. The last time that they met was in Westminster Hall on July 2, a few days before the prorogation. They shook hands, and Mr. Peel offering his arm, they walked up and down the Hall for a quarter of an hour or more, their manner and conversation being marked by mutual cordiality and good will.<sup>4</sup>

Immediately after the close of the session Mr. Canning was attacked by the illness which proved fatal. He went down to the Duke of Devonshire's house at Chiswick, and never left it. On August 4, Lord Cassilis writes: 'I believe Canning to be very ill. I heard he was so from the best authority when I was in London to-day; but in coming down here just now, when I was opposite Chiswick, the Duke of Portland stopped the carriage, when I was sleeping, and gave me a very bad account of Canning. Says he, "I think him very ill. He has a bad pain in his side, and a bad cough," and seemed very low about him. These are bad complaints in his state of body. I also saw Lord Carlisle, who was

<sup>3</sup> 'The tone and temper of Mr. Canning's letters,' the Duke wrote, 'were of a nature to render it im-

possible for me to retain the command of the army.'

<sup>4</sup> Stapleton's *Canning and his Times*.

very melancholy indeed. Clanwilliam, and many more, were on the road to and from Chiswick.'

The end was near. Four days later, on August 8, in the same room as Fox one-and-twenty years before, Canning breathed his last.

Canning's death left Peel in permanence what Canning's coalition with the Whigs had made him for the time, the acknowledged leader of the Tory party in the Commons, and on the best terms with the Tory leader in the Lords. He was out of office, but for an honourable reason, and with the reputation of an able and consistent statesman. He had not solved the Catholic question, but for six years as Chief Secretary he had governed Ireland, for over five years more as Secretary of State he had borne his full share in governing the United Kingdom. He had identified his name with Currency Reform, with Police Reform, with Criminal Law Reform. And he was not yet forty years of age.

'*Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre.*' He knew how to wait, and had not to wait long.

## APPENDIX

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THE following letters (kindly communicated by Alfred Montgomery, Esq.), relating to the policy and effects of the Insurrection Act, and to the suppression of irritating Orange ceremonies in Dublin, during the Viceroyalty of the Marquis of Wellesley, were received too late to be inserted in order of their dates.

### *The Marquis of Wellesley to Mr. Peel.*

' (*Secret.*)

' Jan. 31, 1822.

' Whatever may be the origin of the unhappy condition of the country, the direct means by which it has been produced, and by which the mischief is now protracted and increased, are the operations of secret committees and associations, and the nightly meetings of the lower classes of the people.

' To enable the Executive Government of Ireland to repress in any degree the activity and efficacy of these instruments of disturbance, it is absolutely necessary that I should be authorised to exercise the powers which were entrusted to the Lord Lieutenant by the expired Act commonly called the "Insurrection Act," and also that I should possess the means of apprehending and detaining persons on suspicion which would result from a temporary suspension of the law or legal right usually denominated "the Habeas Corpus."

' In considering the revival of the Insurrection Act, I most anxiously adverted to those provisions which authorise the trial of offenders by a summary process, without the intervention of a petty jury of the county. It would have

afforded me great satisfaction to propose that those provisions should be omitted on the present occasion, but I should not discharge my duty towards his Majesty, his Government, or this country, if I advised any alteration in that part of the Act.'

'Feb. 14.—It is generally stated in every report which I have received that throughout the Southern districts the disposition of the people is for open revolt at the first favourable moment, and it does not appear that this rebellious spirit has subsided in proportion to the extent of the check which the insurrection has sustained from the operation of his Majesty's troops.

'The alarm which prevailed amongst the resident gentry and magistrates is greatly increased, even since the date of my last despatch; their general sentiment concurs in an expectation of a universal rising of the populace for the most dreadful purposes of massacre and rebellion.'

'May 1.—I am convinced that the provinces of Ulster, Connaught, and Leinster would have presented at this moment a much more afflicting scene if the wisdom of his Majesty's Government and of Parliament had not furnished the Lord Lieutenant with the means which have been employed to check the progress of disorder in Munster.

'These are the considerations which demanded the powers granted to the Executive Government under the Insurrection Act. They who dared to be obedient to the law were punished by the control of a predominant power, exercising lawless, cruel, and savage tyranny. This calamitous inversion of public order could not be corrected until the populace should be compelled to abstain from persecuting the law and those who submitted to it.'

*Mr. Peel to Lord Wellesley.*

*(Private and secret.)*

Whitehall: July 21, 1822.

'Mr. Saurin [in 1821] gives a decided opinion that the municipal authorities of Dublin would not be justified in forcibly preventing the decoration of King William's statue



on the mere presumption that it is considered offensive, or an allegation [without affidavits] that it is likely to excite tumult.

‘But I venture to suggest for your Excellency’s consideration whether, if the property of the statue be in the public, or in the Corporation, private individuals might not be considered in the light of trespassers if they persisted after due warning in an attempt to decorate it.

‘My attention has been particularly called to the avowal which was made by the agents of the Orange party in Dublin, that they acted under the orders of a constituted body, which they were bound to respect in preference to the admonition of his Majesty’s representatives on matters concerning the peace and welfare of the country.

‘Of the gross impropriety of such an avowal, as well as of the inexpediency of the existence of any political confederacy issuing compulsory orders, there can be but one opinion. Such a confederacy must be inconsistent with the spirit at least of the Act which was passed in the year 1810; and if the letter of the law does not apply to them, I should not hesitate in giving my consent to an extension of its provisions.’

‘*Nov. 2.*—After the depositions on oath that the observance of the custom on the present occasion will in all probability lead to a serious disturbance of the public peace, I do not consider that it would be consistent either with the dignity or with the duty of Government to abstain from taking those precautions which the law empowers it to take.’

‘*Nov. 18.*—The King warmly approves the temperance and firmness with which you have acted, when (conciliatory admonitions having been disregarded) there was no alternative left but the employment of the civil force.’

‘*Feb. 22, 1823.*—It is, I assure you, completely open to me to take any line or give any opinion with respect to Orange associations that I may think fit. I never countenanced them, I never recognised an Orangeman in that capacity; and in the only public declaration which I ever made upon

the subject, whilst I bore testimony to the past services and loyalty of the individuals who composed those associations in Ireland, I expressly disclaimed the approval of any confederacies of a political nature not connected with the State.

‘ I wish that they ceased to exist. The only difference of opinion can be as to the most effectual way of putting an end to them, and of gradually allaying that spirit of party of which they are the indication and effect rather than the cause.’

‘ *March 10. (Private and secret.)*—On a review of all that has passed since the disgraceful transactions at the theatre in December last, there appear to us to have been some proceedings which, from their being open to misconstruction, account for at least, though they cannot justify, the irritated feelings of that portion of the community which has recently manifested its dissatisfaction with the Government.

‘ We are aware that the prevention of the usual custom of decorating the statue of King William was the chief cause of the riot<sup>1</sup> at the theatre, and of the insults which were then offered to your Excellency, and we always bear in mind that your interference with that ceremony was fully authorised by his Majesty’s Government, and that the measures actually adopted for its suppression were subsequently approved by his Majesty.

‘ But however shameful was the conduct of those persons who planned and were concerned in the riot at the theatre, we cannot consider that the offence committed or contemplated by them was of that heinous and sanguinary character which was originally affixed to it, and we should conceal from you our real opinion if we did not attribute a considerable portion of the jealousies, discontent, and party violence, which have since arisen, to the light in which the transactions at the theatre have been viewed, and more especially to the committal of the parties concerned in them on a charge so grave as that of conspiracy to murder.

<sup>1</sup> Known as ‘ the Bottle Riot,’ a bottle having been flung at the Lord Lieutenant.

‘ We have a strong impression on our minds that, had the persons charged been proceeded against in the ordinary mode for the offence for which they were subsequently indicted, and had no sympathy been excited in their favour by the strong terms in which they were denounced previously to their trial, a conviction would have been highly probable, and that the parties convicted would have become the just objects not only of legal punishment but of general reprobation and disgust.

‘ After the ignoring of the bills by the grand jury, and after the failure to convict on the *ex-officio* information in consequence of the disagreement of the petty jury, we think it would have been prudent to take an early opportunity of signifying an intention to abandon all further legal proceedings.

‘ The introduction of a law extending to Ireland the enactments at present in force in England with regard to secret engagements and societies will show the opinion of the Legislature that, however great the distinction may be between the objects of loyal and those of seditious associations, the common principle of secret connection and obligation is in every case most objectionable.

‘ The disposition of the Government to discourage the causes of offence and irritation has been marked by the conciliatory efforts which were made in the first instance to induce the voluntary abandonment of the usual custom of decorating the statue, and by the subsequent application of the civil force when those efforts had failed. It is now chiefly to be wished that all those who, from their property, character, and habitual residence in Ireland, are possessed of local authority and influence, may be inclined to exert them in friendly co-operation with the Government in allaying the spirit of party discord, and in the encouragement of mutual forbearance and good will.

‘ I am confident that your Excellency will attribute this communication to its real motives, and that you will not consider the candid and open avowal of our opinions, with respect to some points of which you have taken a different

view, inconsistent with a sincere desire to support the measures and uphold the authority of your Administration in Ireland.'

*The Marquis of Wellesley to Mr. Peel.*

'(Secret.)

'Dublin Castle: April 9, 1823.

'During the month of March the system of outrage and terror has been pursued in parts of the province of Munster with increased activity and vigour, and has reached other parts of the country which had been nearly exempt from disturbance.

'Scarcely a night has elapsed in which within those districts some house or property has not been destroyed by fire, or in which attempts have not been made by the insurgents to enforce the penalties previously denounced against all those who resist the authority of these desperate offenders.

'Notwithstanding the most unremitting exertions on the part of the military and the police to intercept those by whom these crimes are committed, few persons have been apprehended. Conflagrations are so easily effected even by one skilful offender, and the system of terror has been so firmly established, that the detection of the crime is become a matter of extreme difficulty.

'The causes of this sudden increase of insurrectionary crime have not yet been sufficiently developed to enable me to furnish you with any determined judgment on that most interesting point.

'The present mischief has been attributed to the greater maturity of that system of combination for the destruction of property which has so long prevailed in Ireland. A temporary cause is stated to be the general expiration of leases which occurs at this period of the year, and which generally leads to acts of disturbance, if not of a more destructive character, against those who occupy the farms from which previous tenants have been ejected.

'I am convinced that the wisdom of his Majesty's Govern-

ment and of Parliament will not delay the renewal of the Insurrection Act. It is a painful but undeniable truth, that the mere circumstance of the unavoidable delay in the renewal of that law has been converted by the secret instigators of confusion into an encouragement to the deluded population of the South, who have been taught to believe that the law will not be renewed, and that its restraints will no longer be opposed to the progress of their crimes.'

'April 27.—I cannot perceive any symptom of improvement in the general spirit of disobedience to the law, and of combination for the destruction of property, and for the overthrow of the established system of rents and tithes, together with all the subsisting relations between landlord and tenant, and the clergyman and the occupier of the soil.

'Evils of such inveterate malignity, whose causes are so deeply seated, whose effects are so widely diffused, cannot be remedied by any one act of legislative or executive power, nor even by the operation of any systematic and extensive plan within any narrowly limited period of time.

'The operation of a fixed, regular, and comprehensive system continued through a long course of years, and steadfastly pursued amidst all temporary obstructions and difficulties, might afford a hope of improving the condition of the disturbed districts and of establishing on a firm basis the general prosperity and happiness of Ireland.

'In my correspondence, public and private, with his Majesty's Government, I have not attempted to submit to you any general system founded on theoretical or speculative principles. But the tenor of all my communications has established for the Government of Ireland a principle on which every practical improvement of the condition of this country must rest—that the regulations necessary for securing the restoration of public order, and the vigorous, effectual, and impartial administration of the law should be combined with the progressive relief of the people from every burden which it is practicable to alleviate, and from every vexation which the legislative or executive power can remove.

‘The due enforcement of obedience to the law essentially connected with its impartial administration, would be the greatest benefit which the Legislature could confer on the people of Ireland.’

‘June 22.—The great calamity under which Ireland now suffers is the bitterness of party, and the perverse rejection of all means of mutual conciliation. If the persons who possess power and influence in each party would co-operate to discourage frivolous provocations of animosity and contest, the condition of society in Ireland would be improved, disaffection would be deprived of its main hope, and loyalty exempted from all fear, without any injury to the just sentiments or to the substantial interests of any class or description of his Majesty’s subjects.’

*Mr. Peel to the Marquis of Wellesley.*

‘(Private and confidential.)

‘June 29, 1823.

‘As a great part of the present agitation appears to arise from undue alarm, and as that alarm has a tendency to create the danger which is apprehended, my colleagues agree with me in thinking that it will be better to avoid the risk of increasing it, and not to require from Parliament any unusual vote of credit.

‘Should the necessity for an increase of force arise, we will not hesitate to take upon ourselves the responsibility of resorting to such measures as may enable us to meet that necessity.

‘We trust your Excellency will concur with us in opinion that this course is upon the whole preferable to the demand for unusual powers.’

*The Marquis of Wellesley to Mr. Peel.*

‘Jan. 30, 1825.

‘In the province of Munster, which had been the principal seat of the spirit of combination and outrage, and of the systematic violence of murder, plunder, and insurrec-

tion, a gradual mitigation of those dreadful offences and public calamities had been observable previous to the month of June 1824. From that time the advance has been decisive, until now the tranquillity of the province appears to be completely restored.

‘The peasantry have returned to the pursuits of labour, industry, domestic and agricultural employment. The more punctual payment of rents is made with promptitude. Leases and purchases of land are generally in request. Tithes are paid with less reluctance, and, where the compositions under the new law have been adopted, with alacrity and contentment. Submission to the laws and to the legal authorities is cheerfully rendered; and a very decided confidence is manifested in the local administration of law and justice. A great diminution of crime of every description in a general sense is remarkable throughout the lately disturbed districts.

‘These happy and auspicious symptoms might perhaps be deemed ambiguous or delusive, if their appearance had been sudden, or partial, or unaccountable, or unexpected. But they are the slow natural growth of general, adequate, and evident causes, of which the gradually rising influence has been traced and marked from root to branch, of which the fruits have been long and confidently anticipated, and which are now become the legitimate attestations of the wisdom of Parliament and of his Majesty’s councils.

‘The Insurrection Act in its general application has been administered rather in a preventive than in a coercive spirit, and with a closely restricted and temperate use of the penalties of that severe statute. Thus administered, it has served the salutary purpose of prevention, and has answered all the ends to which my wishes had been originally directed.

‘If the Act derives its force from the principles of coercion and terror, it has suspended a tyranny which carried both to the utmost extremity of barbarous and relentless cruelty, which had become irresistible by the ordinary powers of law, and which, unresisted, must have

reduced Ireland to an incapacity of receiving any benefit of good government.'

*Mr. Peel to the Marquis of Wellesley.*

'Jan. 18, 1826.

'I have received the several reports from the Inspectors-General of Police. As these refer to the period which has elapsed since the repeal of the Insurrection Act, when your Excellency has had no other powers for the maintenance of public tranquillity than those which the ordinary law of the land commits to you, they afford most satisfactory proofs of the improved condition and habits of the country.'

'Feb. 3.—It is to me a very gratifying reflection that the ardent desire by which each of us is animated to improve the condition of Ireland has caused us in the practical administration of the government almost to forget the existence of our unfortunate difference on the Catholic question. It is not impossible that there have been occasions, amid the collisions of heated parties, when even that difference has been made the instrument of good.'



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